THAT DEVIL WILKES

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Postgate, Raymond William,
1896-1971.

That devil Wilkes

A technique that enabled its possessor to thumb his nose at the King of England with comparative impunity, while it made of a man with a cocked eye the darling of the ladies, cries for examination by biographers. "That Devil Wilkes" he was called by His Britannic Majesty, George III, but in the Colonies he was hailed as friend and protector; Wilkes-Barre was named for him as was Wilkes County, North Carolina, and more than one proud father called his son after the English radical who contemptuously defied the stolid Hanoverian on the throne. Nor did John Wilkes lack enthusiastic admirers at home; three times he was refused admittance by the House of Commons, but after each rebuff his constituents contumaciously re-elected him. A man so hated must have been loved as well: Wilkes' life was checkered by a series of stormy amours; he is said to have boasted that if any man in England granted him ten minutes with wife or mistress he could and would win the woman.

In one of his prefaces, Bernard Shaw complains that he himself as a young man was "unbearably brilliant." The same accusation can be levelled, with justice, against Mr. Postgate. Regarded for some years as one of the most important among the younger generation of English writers, Mr. Postgate now holds a place among the leading contemporary writers of English prose.

R. W. POSTGATE is not only one of the leading figures in the younger generation of English authors but also a vigorous and influential force in the British Labor Party. His father was a distinguished professor of Philology at Cambridge University. After his college training, Mr. Postgate engaged in journalism in London; more recently he has held an important post on the staff of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. His previous books include *Out of the Past*, *Murder, Piracy and Treason*, *Revolution from 1789 to 1906*, etc.

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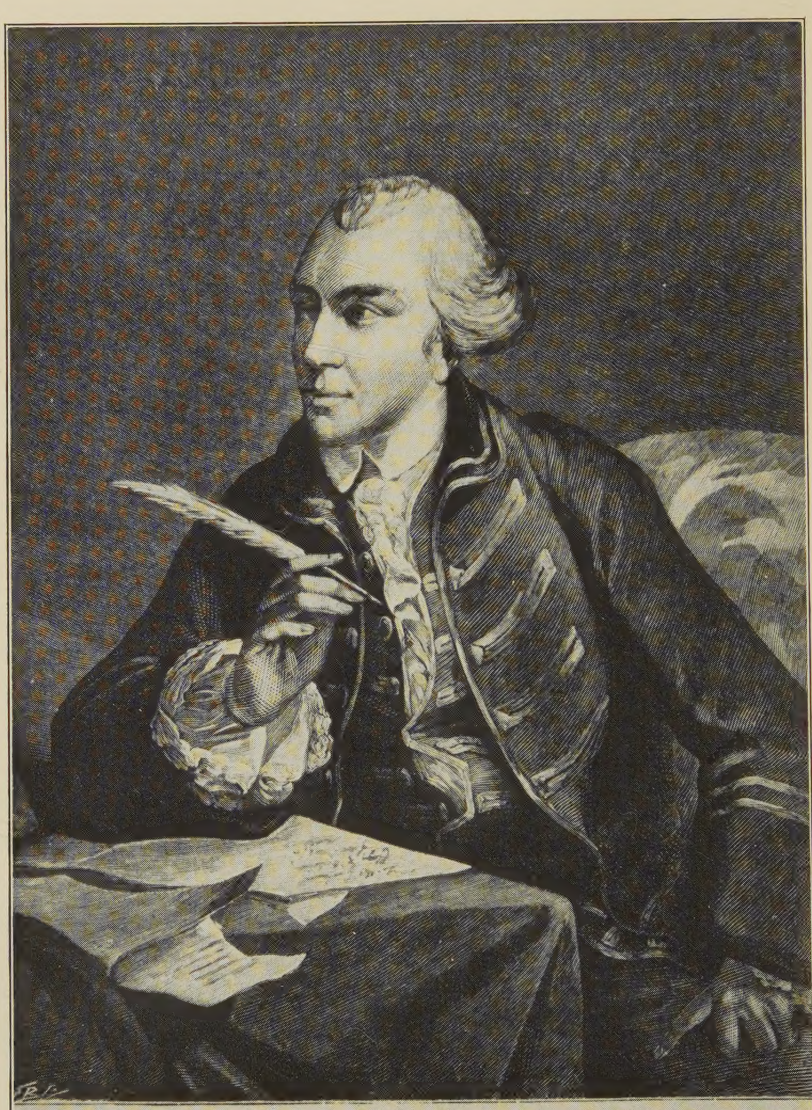
That Devil Wilkes

By the Same Author

MURDER, PIRACY AND TREASON
OUT OF THE PAST
REVOLUTION FROM 1789 TO 1906
THE BUILDERS' HISTORY
PERVIGILIAM VENERIS (*edited and translated*)
THE BOLSHEVIC THEORY



JOHN WILKES, ESQ., CHAMBERLAIN,

1779 - 1797

That Devil
WILKES

by

R. W. POSTGATE

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Preface

THIS life of a man whom George III called "that devil Wilkes" needs only the briefest introduction. The writer of it began it with the usual belief that Wilkes was an amusing but entirely dishonest man. After more than three years of study he has been forced to change his opinion and believe that Wilkes was politically an honest man. Wilkes' private life does not admit of excuse, nor did it seem to him to require it. But he never asked more than to be judged by the claim that is engraved on his coffin and his tombstone, and whether or not that claim is justified should be shown by the pages that follow.

My thanks are due to my wife for continual assistance and criticism, and to James Henle of the Vanguard Press, New York, for encouragement that was almost intemperate in its terms.

R. W. P.

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That Devil Wilkes

I

Early Years

John Almon, a bookseller and the editor of John Wilkes' letters, states that his friend was born on October the 17th, 1727, and that his family originated from Leighton Beausert, a town whose name later vulgarity had corrupted to Leighton Buzzard; in both statements he may have been wrong. There is some reason to believe[1] that Wilkes was two years older than he thought himself to be; there is more reason to hold that his family came from Albrighton in Shropshire. There is no doubt, however, of the place where he was born, nor of the character of his family. The house was in St. John's Square, Clerkenwell, then an undistinguished but well-to-do residential quarter of London; the family contained an unusual number of members who might fairly be described as eccentric. The figure of Wilkes' father Israel is rather faint: he seems to have been a genial and easy-going man much under his wife's influence. He was a distiller and a wealthy man. His wife, Sarah, was a strict Nonconformist and saw to it that her family was trained in the principles in which she believed. Her children gave her much affection, but more respect, and thirty-four years later, when John was sheriff, she wrote him a severe letter lecturing him upon his private life in terms which showed that for her at least their relations were unchanged. Her eldest daughter, Sarah, was a quiet and mild girl, but in the latter half of her life she became melancholy-mad, and shut herself up in a house in Hart Street, near the

British Museum, where she lived with the blinds always down and the lights perennially on. The second daughter, Mary, soon showed signs of an uncontrollable temper. She was married three times, each time to a well-to-do merchant—Samuel Storke, George Hayley and Patrick Jeffrey—the last of whom alone survived the strain of life with her. Israel, the eldest son, turned out amiable, drifting and incompetent; John was the second son; Heaton, the third son, who succeeded to his father's distillery, alone developed into an undistinguished and methodical business man.*

John's education was conditioned partly by his father's desire that he should be a gentleman, partly by his mother's that he should be a dissenter of unimpeachable morals. He was first sent (1734 to 1739) to a well-reputed academy at Hertford, and then taken for private tutoring by the Rev. F. Leeson of Thame, who in 1741 moved to Aylesbury. Mr. Leeson recommended himself to Mrs. Wilkes by the moral tone of his conversation and the theological bent of his mind. He was a Presbyterian clergyman whose whole interest lay in the more speculative aspects of Protestant theology, and after a lifetime of arid investigation he declared himself an Arian. His sole influence upon his pupil seems to have been negative; he caused him to associate earnestness with bigotry, and the conventional morality with false and profitless theological arguments. But he made of him a good scholar in Latin and Greek, and so impressed his parents that when in 1744 they sent him to Leyden in Holland to complete his education, Leeson accompanied him as tutor and guardian.

Wilkes passed nearly two years at Leyden University—years which were in no way distinguishable from those of

* A youngest daughter, Ann, died at fifteen.

thousands of other well-to-do young men of his class. He acquired the polish and manners which his father expected; he became, indeed, a brilliant talker and welcome in any society, despite his hideous face with its twisted mouth, squint eyes and heavy jaw. "It takes me only half an hour to talk away my face," he used to say. He delighted his mother by forming a friendship with the once famous Scots metaphysician, Andrew Baxter, but his mind was more influenced by the brilliance of the atheist Baron d'Holbach. Unperceived by his incompetent tutor, he had also, when he returned in 1746, fully begun his education in the profligacy which was expected of his class and time of life.

But still nothing except a certain refinement of manners marked him out publicly from a hundred other sons of well-to-do and respectable Nonconformists. Mrs. Wilkes certainly had no suspicion of his amorous adventures; Mr. Wilkes may have known that such affairs were part of a gentleman's education. They both agreed that a suitable marriage for him should be arranged forthwith, and their choice fell upon Miss Mary Meade, of the Prebendal House, Aylesbury, a fat and dull young woman much his senior, but an heiress and daughter of an old friend of Mrs. Wilkes who was an even stricter Calvinist than she herself. The marriage was arranged between the parents; John Wilkes was too dutiful and Mary Meade too sluggish to protest. In after years Wilkes saw in this marriage, which took place in 1747, the great mistake of his life. "In my nonage," he wrote,[2] "to please an indulgent father I married a woman half as old again as myself; of a large fortune—my own being that of a gentleman. It was a sacrifice to Plutus, not to Venus. I never lived with her, in the strict sense of the word, nor have I seen her for

nearly twenty years. I stumbled at the very threshold of the temple of Hymen:

> The god of love was not a bidden guest
> Nor present at his own mysterious feast.

Are such ties at such a time of life, binding?—and are schoolboys to be dragged to the altar?"

To the initial mistake of his marriage Wilkes was immediately induced to add another: he went to live with his mother-in-law. For the summer, it is true, the newly married couple lived at the Prebendal House in Aylesbury, but in the winter they moved to Mrs. Meade's house in Red Lion Court, London. Here Wilkes passed the most tedious hours of his life. His wife showed herself after marriage even more massively lethargic and bored than before; his mother-in-law's conversation, which appears to have been incessant, dealt almost wholly with the doctrine of grace and other problems of Calvinist theology. His sole comfort at home was his baby daughter, Polly, born in 1750, to whom he was as devoted as his wife was indifferent. In Aylesbury, life was not intolerable. His friends were rustic, but they were open in their admiration. He found a pleasant occupation in the improvement of his estate: he was an active magistrate, a trustee of charities, and a support of the church, and for nine years was able to satisfy himself with the duties of an undistinguished but public-spirited country gentleman. In London the strain rapidly became too great. He sought eagerly every form of amusement that he could find outside the family circle. He became a Freemason, a Buck and a Leech, and joined the Sublime Society of Beef Steaks and the Loyal Association of 1745.[3] Not all his evening excursions were as innocuous as his attendances at the dinners of these societies. His most fre-

quent companion at this time was Thomas Potter, son of the Archbishop of Canterbury and a man whose mind, energies and correspondence were almost wholly devoted to sexual experience. The only political action that is recorded of him, M.P. for Aylesbury though he was, is that he once promoted a census bill.[4] He rapidly showed Wilkes that as many adventures were to be had in London, Bath and Tunbridge Wells as in Leyden.

But Potter did him a more important service. He introduced him to the powerful Grenville family which wielded enormous influence in politics. Lord Temple, the head of the family, his brother, George Grenville, and his brother-in-law, William Pitt, were from 1756 onwards all in the ministry. Pitt himself was, with Newcastle, the most powerful man in the country and deemed to be indispensable to the conduct of the war with France. Even before this surprising concentration of power in its hands, the Grenville family counted as one of the first in the state, and Wilkes was immensely gratified to find himself received with cordiality and even friendship. He forthwith became an ardent supporter of the combination of Whiggism and imperialism which was the Grenville policy, and his new patrons, who saw that he had eloquence, wit, wealth and enthusiasm, deliberately encouraged him to form parliamentary ambitions.

Out of the three statesmen, Wilkes attached himself chiefly to the head of the family, Richard Lord Temple. The choice, if it was voluntary and conscious, was not odd. The fame of Temple's brother-in-law, the elder and greater Pitt, has with the passing of time grown so enormous that all others have vanished before it; every one knows of Pitt, but who, except students, has heard of Temple, or remembers Grenville, except perhaps vaguely as an early and unlucky meddler in American

affairs? But Pitt, though eminent and indeed famous with the nation at large, did not in 1754 tower over his colleagues. He was but one of a group of prominent Whigs, and in the opinion of many politicians, one whose chief characteristic was unjustified arrogance. Temple, in particular, was far from regarding his brother-in-law as his leader. He, Temple, knew that the diplomatic and military triumphs that the middle-class associated with the name of Pitt, were more properly ascribed to a partnership of Pitt and Temple, or perhaps one should say of Temple and Pitt. He was, after all, head of the family, and as such, at one time (1755) actually paid his famous relative a pension. The offer was indeed made with the delicacy which was natural to a great noble. His letter was not even addressed to Pitt, it was written to Pitt's wife, his own sister Lady Hester.[5] "I cannot defer till to-morrow morning making a request to you, upon the success of which I have so entirely set my heart that I flatter myself you will not refuse it to me. I must entreat you to make use of all your interest with Mr. Pitt to give to his brother Temple leave to become his debtor for a thousand pounds a year till better times. Mr. Pitt will never have it in his power to confer so great an obligation upon, dear Lady Hester, your most truly affectionate brother, Temple."

Secret power and public magnificence, two apparent opposites, were Temple's two chief objects. He had little desire and probably little power to impress the House of Lords as an orator, or the nation as head of a great ministry. But in the direction of appointments and patronage and the suggestion of policy he played in secret a great part, and believed he played a greater. He could never, indeed, have looked upon Pitt merely as his pensioner, but he certainly regarded Pitt's great reputation and career as in part at least his own

achievement. While he denied himself any ostentation in politics, his pride found a full outlet in the splendor of his life and establishments. His seat at Stowe by its magnificence impressed, and slightly annoyed, even Horace Walpole: "The number of buildings and variety of scenes in the gardens made each day different from the rest, and my meditations on so historic a spot prevented my being tired. Every acre brings to one's mind some instance of the parts or pedantry, of the taste or want of taste, of the ambition, or love of fame or greatness, or miscarriages of those who have inhabited, decorated, planned, or visited the place. . . . On Wednesday night a small Vauxhall was acted for us at the grotto in the Elysian fields, which was illuminated with lamps, as were the thickets and the two little barks on the lake. With a little exaggeration I could make you believe that nothing was so delightful." [6]

Such opulence necessarily awed a man who was, for all his polish and wit, a rather inexperienced Buckinghamshire squire. It was ten years or more before Wilkes freed himself of the great influence which Temple now secured over him. At the moment there was no political work that he would not do for his chief, and felt himself amply rewarded by the receipt of letters signed "your affectionate and obedient Temple," "your affectionately devoted Temple." [7] He was glad even to run round the bookshops collecting pamphlets and books for George Grenville and to send them down to his house.[8]

In the election of 1755 the Grenvilles decided that their new adherent might well be used for a raid upon a seat held by a rival interest. Berwick, one of the many corrupt boroughs represented in Parliament, was the preserve of the Delaval family of Seton Delaval near Newcastle. Temple encouraged and authorized Wilkes to attempt to capture it.

He went north and did his best. He bribed the captain of a ship transporting Delaval voters from London to Berwick to land them "by mistake" in Norway.[9] He told the electors, "Gentlemen, I come here *uncorrupting* and I promise you I shall ever be *uncorrupted*. As I will never take a bribe so I will never offer one,"[10] and then spent between three and four thousand pounds purchasing votes. But the contest was hopeless; he secured only 192 votes, his chief opponent receiving as many again. He returned to London to meet the reproaches and indignation of his wife and mother-in-law, who despised his political ambitions, were jealous of his friends, and considered that the money wasted in Berwick might have been better spent on the meeting house.

The relations between Wilkes and his wife were getting worse and worse. There was no shred of affection between them. His wife and her mother regarded him as a contemptible character; he considered them stupid, malicious and tedious. At the end of 1756 Wilkes and his wife took the sensible course of separating for a while, and early in 1757 another disagreement made them separate forever. Polly, their six-year-old daughter, fell seriously ill of the smallpox. Wilkes rushed to her bedside in deep alarm, and sent urgently for her mother. Mrs. Wilkes, either through fear of infection or complete indifference, refused to come, either then or when her daughter was convalescent. Wilkes' disillusionment was expressed in words of bitter contempt, and the couple were formally separated, Wilkes allowing his wife £200 a year. They never met again.*

* Wilkes next year (1758) made an attempt, rejected by the courts, to cancel the separation, probably in view of the large fortune which his wife expected shortly to inherit. It was alleged his object was to deprive her of the £200 annuity, but of this there is no proof, nor is it probable. See H. W. Bleackley's *John Wilkes,* pp. 46, 47.

In the same year, 1757, he achieved his great ambition; he was elected to Parliament, and that for his home town of Aylesbury. Pitt had decided to sit for Bath, thereby vacating the pocket borough of Oakhampton. Wilkes' friend Potter, the M.P. for Aylesbury, offered to resign Aylesbury in favor of Wilkes, and take the empty Oakhampton seat. Wilkes could not refuse, even if he had wished. But of course all these changes cost money, and the countryman paid. The seat of Aylesbury, when Potter had done with him, cost Wilkes the absurd sum of £7,000. "He might, at the time, have purchased a borough for the whole septennial period for less money." * However, the friendship of the great has to be paid for, and Wilkes with good grace took a silent place in Parliament, among the ranks and ranks of supporters of the Pitt and Newcastle ministry.

* As it was, he could hold Aylesbury for only four years more at the best.

II

The Plans of George the Third

On ascending the throne on October 25th, 1760, George III found that the power nominally reserved to the crown had been lost through the apathy of his two predecessors. The government, headed by William Pitt and the Duke of Newcastle, was the seat of all authority; the crown had been relegated to a position of ornamental impotence hardly, if at all, less insignificant than its position to-day. A war was in progress, for whose direction it was universally agreed that Pitt's services were indispensable: Parliament was entirely at the service of the government, and if enthusiasm failed, the bribes and "management" of Newcastle retained its support by more material chains. Opposition, except of a personal, factious, and intermittent kind, scarcely existed: nor did any one doubt that George III would quietly accept the unimportant position occupied by George I and George II.

Since the death of Anne in 1714 the Whig families had monopolized power. Two Jacobite rebellions had kept the Tories under suspicion and prevented them, as a party, from forming an effective opposition. Neither of the Georges could or would exercise the authority of the crown and, first under Walpole and then under Newcastle, the Whig families played a complicated, oligarchic game of patronage; the history of the eighteenth century is filled with the tedious account of the intrigues of brother against brother-in-law, and politics can be followed only by a reader of Debrett. Walpole intro-

duced large-scale corruption, and thenceforward offices as well as office were divided between the families. Hordes of their retainers were quartered upon the public purse: Walpole's son, Horace, naturally one of the best-supplied, reflected complacently that sinecures and patents were as much a gentleman's property, and as honorable, as were his estates, for they were often as ancient and generally as respectably acquired. But, like any oligarchy which has pastured easily and long on the state, the Whigs had become divided, lazy and fat; the irruption of Pitt himself into their ranks had been, in part at least, a warning from outside, of discontent at gross incompetence in the conduct of a war. In this year 1760 the Pitt-Newcastle coalition had behind it apparent unanimity, but in fact each section was watching the other closely, and once unity was broken the Whigs would dissolve into various ducal "gangs," each playing for its own hand. If the king were to use the influence of the crown to form a party by the means that the dukes did, no single interest could resist him.

Probably the most popular of the Whig groupings was that which later came to be called "Lord Chatham's friends." Of this set it might with some persuasiveness be argued that the purely personal allegiance was reinforced by principle. These imperialists desired the continuance of the war till France—and if necessary Spain—were crushed, and the empire expanded to its largest limits. Their interest was in the advantage of the trade of London and the great ports. Their natural leader was, of course, Pitt, but Temple, who, as related, had allowed his brother-in-law £1,000 a year in 1755 while he was out of office, regarded himself as at least Pitt's equal, and indeed from time to time attempted to direct him.[1] Beckford, the Lord Mayor of London, was to prove an im-

portant supporter, as representing that great source of power. Lord Shelburne at a little later date was the chief "political organizer," as we might say, for this group. His assistance did not add to its reputation: he was believed to be incurably indirect, unreliable, and dishonest; he was nicknamed "Malagrida" for his jesuitry; and in his mouth were put the verses:

> A noble Duke affirms I like his plan;
> I never did, my Lords, I never can;
> Plain words, thank Heaven! are always understood:
> I *could* support, I said, but not I *would*.

As an offshoot from the Temple faction, Temple's brother, the stiff pedant, George Grenville, in a short while formed with Lord Halifax another group of his own, to which little in the way of general principles can be assigned. A more powerful and more predatory faction was attached to the grossly wealthy Duke of Bedford. It received the name of the "Bloomsbury gang." To this group belonged such men as Lord Egremont, Lord Sandwich * and the brazen agent of corruption, Rigby. Both these factions were of inestimable service to George in securing his domination. What remained of the Tories, first under Bute and then under Lord North, might in addition be counted as assured supporters of the king: their strength among the "country gentlemen" was far from negligible. Newcastle had at the outset an even greater personal following than Bedford, but, dependent solely on his purse, it melted more quickly than any other.

The steadiest opposition was to be looked for from those who came to be called the "old Whigs," and accepted the

* But Walpole classes Sandwich as purely a creature of the Duke of Cumberland, who was, partly because of Culloden, a Whig dignitary. Of course, the great difficulty in classifying all minor eighteenth-century politicians is that they were not honest in Boss Cameron's sense—"an honest politician is one who, when he's bought, will stay bought."

direction of the Duke of Devonshire and the Marquis of Rockingham. Their best Parliamentary speaker proved to be Edmund Burke. Their principles—for this group at least had principles—were severely oligarchic, but in this age of universal corruption their restraint, their care for economy and their attempts to prune the enormous expenditure of the Crown give them almost a Puritan air. They, rather than Pitt or Temple, proved to be the consistent enemies of the advancing power of George III; as instruments in this conflict rather than for the rights of the case they supported the freedom of the press against the House of Commons, the American colonists' revolt against the Crown, and the rights of the Middlesex electors in the Wilkes elections. Their central principle was oligarchic: the defense of the settlement of the revolution of 1688 and the retention of the privileges silently acquired since then by the Whig families. When in 1780 Sir George Savile and other Yorkshire members began a public agitation among the country electors against the government of Lord North, many of the most influential of this group of Whigs withheld their aid in the characteristic belief that such electioneering was unsuitable to the dignity of a gentleman.

The new king, therefore, in the determination which he had formed to break up the power of the great Whig families, had a task which was more formidable in appearance than reality. He also had an instrument which was more dangerous than it seemed. Wilkes' later parodies and insults have fastened upon John Stuart, Lord Bute, the reputation of a weak and foolish fop with a well-turned leg; nothing could be more unfair. It is true Bute himself had no heart for his work, that he attempted it only under direct pressure from the king and that he resigned at the earliest possible moment,

but while he was in charge the king's policy was more skillfully directed towards royal aggrandizement than it ever was again. Though handicapped as a Tory and Scotsman, he was the instrument by which an apparently irresistible coalition was shattered; he bought Parliament for the king, and he made him the master of England. If George III had retained to the end of his life the power that he had on Bute's resignation in 1763, he would have fulfilled his mother's exhortation, "George, be King."

George III wished the moment he ascended the throne brusquely to appoint Bute Secretary of State. With characteristic caution, Bute declined and appeared at the Privy Council in the apparently unimportant position of Groom of the Stole. He warned his colleagues early that they were not to presume upon this; "I suppose," he said to Temple, "your Lordship does not mean to look on me as a bare groom of the stole. The king will have it otherwise." Nevertheless, the other changes made by George III in the Pitt-Newcastle coalition appeared at the time more important. H. B. Legge, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to whom he objected, was removed and his place taken by a nonentity, Lord Barrington, whose position at the War Office was occupied by Charles Townshend, a rising young politician whom there was hope of detaching from Newcastle; Lord Henley, a subservient placeman, was made Lord Chancellor. If Newcastle had remained loyal to Pitt, no harm could have been done. But almost for itself an intrigue attracted the duke, and he was persuaded in the March of 1761 to please the king and check an arrogant colleague by consenting, without Pitt's knowledge, to the appointment of Bute as Secretary of State. Pitt was indignant at Newcastle's treachery, which he made the basis of a lasting distrust, and the split in the ministry had begun.

To weaken Newcastle was easier than to weaken Pitt. In the same spring the general elections had been held. Professing a regard for the purity of elections which later events make odd, Bute had informed Newcastle that he could no longer have the use of the royal funds or royal influence to purchase seats, nor even the nominations for the royal boroughs. Though it does not seem proved that Bute was guilty of the double-dealing of purchasing seats for the king at this particular election, the mere withholding of funds placed the duke in a most difficult position. By enormous personal expenditure, he believed he had secured a majority in the new Parliament, but its composition and aspect made it clear that at any moment the great mass of it, as true placemen, would desert to the wealthier side. With Newcastle weakened, the chief task of George and his instrument Bute was to get rid of Pitt. But Pitt could never finally be dispensed with until the war was over. Therefore, peace was necessary, and for this Newcastle, his ally Lord Hardwicke, and the Duke of Bedford were found to be convenient instruments. They were anxious, not indeed for the annihilation of Pitt, but to diminish his overbearing importance, nor is there any reason to deny them an honest belief that peace was now attainable and necessary. Negotiations were opened in March, 1761, and continued until September. Their existence irritated Pitt, their continual non-success irritated Newcastle. Bute was far too adroit to support Newcastle openly. He balanced between the two; till the late summer, indeed, he seemed to favor Pitt rather than Newcastle. But on August 15th the Franco-Spanish "family compact" was signed. Though the full text of this was not generally known, enough was known to make Pitt declare that war with Spain had become inevitable. This, indeed, was true, or rather, it was true that unless peace with

France was speedily made, war with Spain would follow. But even though the negotiations with France had petered out, few of his fellow members were prepared for such drastic action as declaring war on Spain. Pitt was defied by his own colleagues, and on October 2nd, 1761, he and Temple resigned.

Pleased though the court must have been at this signal victory, the resignation created such a sensation that its effects had to be minimized. Pitt himself was kind enough to provide the means. The intentions of the king were not yet fully known, and neither Pitt nor Temple saw any reason why the former should not accept the pension and ("for his wife") the Barony of Chatham which were cunningly offered him. But what seemed to them the most natural political reward bore a very different aspect to the outside world, which had formed a quite other conception of the "great commoner's" independence and dignity. It had been believed that there was at least one politician who could not be bought, and the bitterness of deception destroyed any chance there might have been of Pitt's leading an effective opposition. The people of London called the new peeress Lady Cheat'em; Horace Walpole filled his correspondence with comments nearly as vigorous. "Am I not an old fool? at my years to be a dupe to virtue and patriotism; I, who have seen all the virtue of England sold six times over! . . . I adored Mr. Pitt, as if I was just come from school and reading Livy's lives of Brutus and Camillus and Fabius; and romance knows whom. Alack, alack, Mr. Pitt loves an estate as well as my lord Bath!" "I am in such a passion I cannot tell you what I am angry about—why, about Virtue and Mr. Pitt; two errant cheats, gipsies! I believe he was a comrade of Elizabeth Canning when he lived at Enfield Wash. . . . In fact, madam, this immaculate man has accepted the Barony of Chatham for his wife with a

pension of three thousand pounds a year for three lives. . . . What! to sneak out of the scrape, prevent peace, and avoid the war! blast one's character, and all for the comfort of a paltry annuity, a long-necked peeress and a couple of Grenvilles! The City looks mighty foolish, I believe, and possibly even Beckford may blush. Lord Temple resigned yesterday: I suppose his virtue pants for a dukedom." [2]

Pitt out of the way, the war was ended and Newcastle extinguished speedily. A rupture with Spain, indeed, could not be avoided. But in February, 1762, the Tsarina of Russia died and was succeeded by the Tsar Peter III, a hearty admirer of the King of Prussia. Immediately Bute argued that the reasons which had led England to support Prussia and to promise a subsidy of £670,000 no longer operated. So far from Prussia's being now in danger of annihilation, she was in a position, with Russia as a friend and not an enemy, to extract revenge. The subsidy should indeed be paid, but not for war purposes: its condition should be that Prussia should make peace. Newcastle, who foresaw the Prussian reply, offered a feeble opposition—feeble because his hands were tied by his previous declarations—but in vain. The King of Prussia, not unnaturally, declined to give up the war when his prospects were brightest; in reply, on April 30th, the British cabinet canceled the pledged subsidy. Newcastle, at last realizing that he was powerless, resigned on May 24th. His last political message, to the Marquis of Rockingham, was characteristic: [3] "If you or the marchioness may have any jobs which I can do before I go out, let me know immediately." Bute himself took Newcastle's place as first lord of the treasury. Lord Egremont, a brother-in-law of George Grenville, had taken the seals when Pitt left. Grenville himself,

Temple's brother, had remained in the ministry and quarreled with Temple.

When Temple and Pitt resigned they had no intention of condemning themselves to silence. Among their most hopeful supporters was the M.P. for Aylesbury. Wilkes' method of living had as early as 1760 involved him in such difficulties that a government appointment was urgently needed. He had tried twice for the ambassadorship at Constantinople, once for the governorship of Canada, and once for a post at the Board of Trade, but without success. With the resignation of his patron his chances disappeared. He did not, however, hesitate one moment to continue his zealous support. He would have approved the feeling if not the words of Temple's retainer, John Almon the bookseller, that Bute's victory "inspired the dread that Unanimity, Dignity, and Mr. Pitt were now no more to benefit the public."[4] It was in this year, 1761, that he first gave his serious and continued attention to politics, and on March 9th, 1762, he published his first political pamphlet, *Observations on the Papers Relative to the Rupture with Spain*.[5] Easily and effectively written, still it would not, one may believe, have survived if it had been written by any one but Wilkes. It repeats the general trend of Pitt's and Temple's argument, claims that war with Spain was inevitable and should have been foreseen, and complains of the inadequacy of the documents supplied to Parliament. It had some success; Wilkes with his usual frivolity, informed an ambitious parson named John Douglass that rumor declared him, Douglass, to be the author. The clergyman, whose whole mind was set on preferment, spent anxious days seeking for the source of the rumor, at last appealing distractedly to Wilkes himself, who graciously promised to contradict it and offered his "warm wishes" for his advancement.[6]

With the assistance of the Duke of Bedford, the richest of Whigs and the strongest supporter of peace, Bute opened negotiations, naming the duke himself as ambassador. As soon as the proposed terms were known, Pitt and Temple were infuriated, and encouraged Wilkes to further attacks, in the *North Briton,* which, as will be later explained, he started in June, 1762. Martinique, Guadeloupe, Mariegalante and St. Lucia—at that time exceedingly valuable possessions—were to be surrendered. Havana would have been handed back without compensation but for the objections of Grenville and Egremont; and to prevent their obstructing in the same way again, Henry Fox, an abler briber than even the Duke of Newcastle, was brought into the cabinet with the task of "managing" the House of Commons. Conscious of his power, the king as a deliberate insult and warning to the Whigs, struck the name of the Duke of Devonshire, to some extent their recognized head, off the list of the Privy Council on November 3rd. Only then did Rockingham and the other orthodox Whigs realize what was happening, resign their posts and formally go into Opposition. Newcastle then, thinking that he might be a power again, attempted through the Duke of Cumberland to organize a united opposition, including Pitt. He found, to his naïve surprise, that Pitt regarded him as a treacherous colleague and would have nothing to do with him, offering as a further reason his obligations in past years to many of the Tories, which forbade him to enter into a regular Whig-Tory partisan fight. The potential opposition remained in isolated groups, the peace preliminaries were triumphantly passed through Parliament, the appointments of Newcastle for years past were canceled and his nominees expelled, and peace itself signed on February 10th of the next year. Not until March 8th, 1763, when events had confirmed

the king in his power, was Pitt to dine with Newcastle, Rockingham and Hardwicke, and some kind of an alliance to be patched up.

The strength of that alliance, and its provisions, immediately were severely tested by an attack on the most active of Temple's journalist supporters, John Wilkes, who in the meantime had evolved from a man of pleasure into an important politician.

III

The Hellfire Club and the "North Briton"

With his separation from his wife Wilkes had plunged finally into a life of debauchery. His friend Thomas Potter, richer, looser and more a man of the world, initiated him into a circle which scandalized even the eighteenth century. He dominated his younger friend; it is clear from the small remains of their correspondence that it was he and not Wilkes who was the leader. An example of his habits and his selfishness is a letter which, on October 19th, 1752,[1] he wrote to Wilkes urging him to come with him to Bath "if you prefer young women and whores to old women and wives, if you prefer toying away hours with little Sattin Back to the evening conferences of your Mother-in-law . . . but above all if the Heavenly inspired passion called Lust have not deserted you." He explains that he is traveling to avoid the presence of his newborn daughter—"the odious yell of a young female Yahoo that thrust herself into the world yesterday." Potter ruined Wilkes financially as well as morally, for he introduced him to the Jews,[2] and seventeen years later the Supporters of the Bill of Rights were attempting to pay off the resultant debts. He wrote with him, and read to his friends, the Grenvilles, indecent parodies which later led to the chief disaster of Wilkes' career. A letter of Potter's of October the 28th, 1754, tells how at dinner with Pitt—only the initial is given but an indecent reference to "Lady H. Gr." (Temple's sister) makes the ascription certain—"we read over your Parody.

He bid me tell you that he found with great concern you was as wicked and as agreeable as ever." [3] This parody was probably not the famous *Essay on Woman* which the two had compiled, but one of the smaller, equally tedious parodies to be found at the end of that book, which are more of a length to be read at a dinner-table. Finally, at some uncertain date Wilkes was formally admitted, through Potter's influence, to the ranks of the famous Medmenham * monks, whose Superior was Sir Francis Dashwood, the colonel of the Buckinghamshire militia.

The men whom he now met had to recommend them neither gifts of mind nor—except perhaps in one direction—gifts of body. They were a group of dull-witted libertines (and Wilkes always afterwards spoke of them with contempt. Wilberforce has left a characteristic anecdote of one of them, Lord March, afterwards infamous for years as "Old Q." March was entertaining some friends to dinner at his villa at Richmond. The subjects of horseflesh and women, in which alone he was interested, failing for the moment, the guests spoke of the beautiful view of the Thames. March stared uncomprehending for some minutes, then said, "What is there to make so much of in the Thames? I am quite tired of it—there it goes, flow, flow, flow, always the same." [4] Of Dashwood alone Wilkes allowed that he "had some imagination." [5] The monuments to that baronet's eccentric fancy, indeed, are still scattered about Buckinghamshire. At the corner of Bradenham Road an obelisk, as foolish-looking as Dashwood's own round face, commemorates the fact that he made that straight piece of road which connects High and West Wycombe. Above, on the hill, rises the strange shape of West

* Pronounced Mednam.

Wycombe Church, which he rebuilt, and beneath which he excavated a cave.[6] In his mausoleum in the churchyard he deposited the embalmed heart of his friend Paul Whitehead, encased in lead, and it was shown to tourists till, in 1839, one of them stole it.* To the hollow globe at the top of the church he used to retire with Wilkes and Charles Churchill, the poet, for drinking bouts. The inscription MEMENTO upon the church lacked the usual MORI; Wilkes later hinted that this was because the missing word was MERI, and that the pious people who believed that the church called on them not to forget death were in fact being told "Don't forget the drink."[7] Architectural puns and practical jokes were Sir Francis' delight; in his grounds he had also an elaborately constructed stone pillar, and a narrow door to a temple, which cannot be more particularly described, but whose symbolism was obvious. On either side was an urn dedicated to Potiphar's wife and the Matron of Ephesus; the gardens were further adorned by a statue of Priapus.[8] To the collection entitled the *New Foundling Hospital for Wit* he and his circle, with others, contributed many *jeux d'esprits* and *curiosa,* including Wilkes' description of Dashwood's seat.[9] One of the simplest and least objectionable of the jests in this book was the account of a pastime of an idle moment, which was to take a newspaper and read on, following the line, from one column to the next.[10] This gave some unexpected sentences, as for example,

> This morning the Right Honourable the Speaker
> was convicted of keeping a disorderly house.

* R. Gibbs, *Worthies of Bucks, s.v.* Whitehead. The Rev. A. K. Plaisted, *Manor and Records of Medmenham,* p. 225, states that at Whitehead's funeral (1775) Dashwood brought out the Buck's militia, with choir, fife, horns, and a crêpe-covered drum, to carry the heart in a marble urn and attend a specially composed oratorio afterwards.

This day His Majesty will go in state
to fifteen notorious common prostitutes.

Friday a poor blind man fell into a sawpit
to which he was conducted by Sir Clement Cottrel.

A certain commoner will be created a peer
. . . No greater reward will be offered.

At a very full meeting of Common Council
the greatest show of horned cattle this season.

But Dashwood's greatest practical joke, and the one in the most doubtful taste, was the Order of Medmenham monks itself.

Zeal for the Protestant religion was claimed as the excuse for the foundation of the order, and has even been accepted as valid by a modern writer. Dashwood, in his youth, attended a service in Rome at the Sistine Chapel, where he observed that the worshipers pretending to scourge themselves for their sins laid on the whip very lightly. Scandalized by this Papist lack of devotion (it is alleged), he concealed a horse-whip under a heavy coat on Good Friday and when the lights went down for the flagellation, laid about him right and left. Howls of more than contrition indicated what was happening, and Dashwood had to run for his life. This experience suggested to him the devising of a parody of Roman Catholic ritual.[11] Twelve libertines, including Dashwood, Sir T. Stapleton, Potter, Wilkes, Lord Orford, Lord Sandwich, Lord March and others whose identity is not certain, formed a ring of full initiates, while there were other "inferiors" allowed to be present. Paul Whitehead the poet ("Paul the aged") acted as secretary and steward. It may be true, as is suggested in a novel called *Chrysal, or the Adventures of a*

Guinea * that Wilkes was not a full initiate, but all details are uncertain. Women were—necessarily—present at the meetings, which occurred at irregular intervals during the summer. Whether they were women of the town, or women from the same class as the monks, who indulged in the same freedom as the men, is uncertain. Churchill's lines,

> Whilst womanhood in habit of a nun
> At Medmenham lies, by backward monks undone,

may perhaps suggest the latter. If there was, indeed, any possibility of a woman coming to Medmenham not "undone," it was quite certain that she would not leave it again in the same condition. The worship was addressed to the goddess of love, whom the monks called the Bona Dea; the "communion cup" was curiously carved and shaped to remind the drinker of his ritual. *Fay ce que vouldras,* Rabelais' motto for the Abbey of Theleme, was the motto engraved over the great gate; within a cave in the garden was a naked statue of Venus turning her back, pulling a thorn from her foot and inscribed with some misapplied verses of Virgil (*Aen.* vi, 540, 542-3) and again a statue of Priapus with a relief on the pedestal of creatures coming out from Trophonius' cave, all melancholy except a cheerful cock and a laughing Carmelite; † a singularly indecent picture (and in this connection singularity in indecency indicates a very great obscenity) painted by Sir Francis himself, afterwards hung for years in the King's Arms in Old Palace Yard—it represented him in Franciscan habit kneeling before the haloed object of his adoration. What

* Vol. III, 231, to Vol. IV, 28. The account given in this book seems to me unconvincing: I suspect it of being written from hearsay, despite Wilkes' testimony. The Order was often also called the "hellfire club."

† Wilkes explained *omne animal post coitum triste præter gallum gallinaceum et sacerdotem gratis fornicantem.*

little more is known of this ritual is unprofitable and perhaps impossible to discuss. There is, indeed, little more recorded, for "at one end of the refectory was Harpocrates, the Egyptian god of silence, at the other the goddess Angerona, that the same duty might be enjoined to both sexes." Wilkes merely says, "They seem at least to have *sinned naturally.*"

The order was broken up in 1763, by a prank for which Wilkes was responsible. He concealed a large baboon, dressed as a devil, in a box, and by means of string released it when the half-mad Lord Orford was reciting a prayer to Satan. For a minute the revelers believed their prayer was answered; the terrified baboon leapt on to the shoulders of the peer, who was incoherent with fear. It then escaped into the gardens, to frighten the villagers and incense them against the order.[12] The meetings were never held again: before the monks' nerves were sufficiently steady for a new "service" political divisions had parted them, and the Abbey was left again to molder.*

In this licentious circle Wilkes met two poets, Charles Churchill and his admirer Robert Lloyd, who were to form with him a much-feared triumvirate on the *North Briton.* Lloyd, an amiable and simple Welshman, had no claims to high poetic distinction. He wrote lengthy, flowing, ephemeral satires in undistinguished verse; he admired his greater friend Churchill and was (wrote Wilkes) content "to scramble round the foot of Parnassus on his little Welsh pony which seems never to have tired." He served usefully as an assistant later on the *North Briton,* fell into debt by imitating his friends' vices, was confined in the Fleet prison where he lived on Churchill's bounty and died of a broken heart after

* The present condition is uncertain. An inquirer at the Abbey in 1927 was informed that it had once again been closed, that it could not be seen and that it had been "restored" out of all recognition.

Churchill's death. Churchill, however, considered himself, and was considered by the public at large, nearly as important a figure as Pope, and was certainly a formative writer in the history of English literature. His fame in his life was enormous, his eclipse after his death rapid. In 1804 the editor of his collected works, aware that he was fanning a dying flame, pleaded that although Churchill was often as contemptible a poet as Donne, yet he frequently rose as high as Dryden.

In person, Churchill was huge and clumsy. His face was heavy, his legs and arms astonishingly thick, his body lumbering. His features showed marks of dissipation and were soon to be ravaged by the disease which is a frequent consequence of the life he led.[13] In his *Independence* he drew a portrait of himself:

> Vast were his bones, his muscles twisted strong;
> His face was short, but broader than 'twas long;
> His features, though by nature they were large,
> Contentment had contrived to overcharge,
> And bury meaning, save that we might spy
> Sense lowering in the pent-house of his eye;
> His arms were two twin oaks; his legs so stout
> That they might bear a Mansion House about;
> Nor were they, look but at his body there,
> Designed by fate a much less weight to bear.

He was a clergyman forced out of his living, and had to bear many reproaches for his manner of life. In 1763 he added to the difficulties of the *North Briton* and nearly saw the inside of a jail through abducting and seducing the young daughter of a Westminster stone mason, Carr. This did not prevent his enlarging freely upon the personal faults of all his opponents: it is indeed in such invective that his chief merits lie. Here, too, lies the secret of his oblivion; his polished writing, his great vigor and his clear English are

used to expose intrigues and vent passing disagreements. To appreciate his merits it is necessary to have a detailed knowledge of the politics of a complicated decade of the eighteenth century; the jewels of his writing lie undiscovered in a tangle of political allusion. Who now can offhand explain why such loud laughter greeted his lines on Scotland?

> No flower embalms the air but one white rose
> Which on the tenth of June by instinct blows.*

From time to time we can extract typical lines, as these on Bishop Warburton, Potter's enemy, in whom were combined two unlovely antinomies, the ambitious clergyman and the inaccurate pedant:

> Who was so proud, that should he meet
> The Twelve Apostles in the street,
> He'd turn his nose up at them all,
> And shove his Saviour from the wall.

He secured his fame by the unadvertised publication in 1761 of the *Rosciad,* a satire on actors in the manner of Pope, which suddenly leapt into favor and enabled him to pay his debts. In it he had highly praised Garrick, but, partly to show his power, he chastised him in the *Apology,* issued in April of the same year. He was gratified by an anxiously protesting letter from Garrick, sent through Lloyd, and thenceforward the actor kept carefully in Churchill's graces. Churchill wrote too much and too fast; in October he produced *Night,* a defense addressed to Lloyd of their vicious habits, of which the *Critical Review* said not unfairly, "This *Night,* like many

* *The Duellist.*—The explanation of Churchill's epigram above is: The "white rose" was the Stuart flower, the "10th of June" was the Pretender's birthday; it was a stock eighteenth-century joke to say that the climate of Scotland was so evil that vegetation was wholly absent.

others at this time of the year, is very cold, long, dark and dirty." In 1763 he joined in Wilkes' campaign against the Scots by publishing the *Prophecy of Famine,* which had as great a vogue as the *Rosciad,* and from that time onward his works, such as the *Epistle to William Hogarth,* the *Duellist* (addressed to Samuel Martin), or the *Candidate,* were as much political "leaders" as poems. He praised his friend with too generous enthusiasm:

> Wilkes—with good and honest men
> His actions speak much stronger than my pen,
> And future ages shall his name adore,
> When he can act and I can write no more.
> (*The Candidate*)

He abused his enemies with equal vigor. Of Sandwich, after he had launched the attack on Wilkes, he wrote in the same poem:

> To whip a top, to knuckle down at taw,
> To swing upon a gate, to ride a straw,
> To play at pushpin with dull brother peers,
> To belch out catches in a porter's ears,
> To reign the monarch in a midnight cell,
> To be the gaping chairman's oracle
> Whilst in most blessed union rogue and whore
> Clap hands, huzza, and hiccup out *Encore!* . . .
> With midnight howl to bay th' affrighted moon,
> To walk with torches through the streets at noon. . . .
> To coin newfangled wagers and to lay 'em,
> Laying, to lose, and, losing, not to pay 'em;
> Lothario, on that stock which nature gives,
> Without a rival stands, though March yet lives.

Nature or ill luck made of Wilkes throughout his life a lonely man. His wife had proved unlovable, his near companions were empty-headed and were soon to prove treacher-

ous, Temple with the passing of time became more a patron than a friend. Because women were to him all "little sattin-backs" or "moulds of Venus" he did not till late in life (1778, in his relations with Mrs. Stafford) even comprehend the possibility of a woman as friend as well as mistress. Churchill became his closest friend, the only man whom he ever trusted, and he poured on the diseased and uncouth journalist affection the more generous because it was deprived of other outlets. He enlisted him as a colleague, and with Lloyd's aid and Temple's blessing, the two launched the famous *North Briton.*

The first number of this journal * appeared on June 6th, 1762. Its title was chosen as a satirical reply to that of the *Briton,* edited by Smollett, and intermittently it made attempts to carry on the fiction of being written by a too-enthusiastic countryman of Lord Bute. The strain of this pretense was obvious even in the first and third numbers and was wholly abandoned after the tenth issue (August 7th); it had not been regularly observed even before then.† In its time, however, it had served a useful purpose in providing an easy vehicle for jests against Bute. The Favorite was, indeed, doing no more than "taking care of his friends" in the usual manner. But these friends were naturally enough often both Scotsmen and Tories. They were representatives, that is, of a nation which had twice already in that century risen in armed rebellion against the Hanoverian dynasty, and politically they belonged to a party which was still divided by only the thinnest line of

* The *North Briton* ran to 45 regular numbers. Bound up with it generally are several fragments of proposed later numbers and a No. 46, of little interest, published in the autumn. The later numbers of the *North Briton* are a continuation (May 10, 1768-April 10, 1769) by William Bingley, a Wilkite printer. The *Extraordinary North Briton* (1769) is also by a Wilkite printer, William Moore, author of several pamphlets on the Brentford riots.

† The "Scottizing" issues are Nos. 2, 4, 6, 7, 10. Up till No. 8 the *North Briton* is always semi-satirical at least.

expediency from the Jacobites. Moreover, as Dilke [14] pointed out later, Bute was dispensing places to Scotsmen with an unprecedented lavishness, for the process of enrolling the "king's friends" was beginning.* The *North Briton* was responsible for the first form of the famous epigram, "Every person brought in by the Whigs has lost his post—except the king." † The *Briton* was driven into the unpopular position of having to praise the valor and virtue of the Scots. "Our countryman the *Briton,"* replied the *North Briton* on July 7th, "has enumerated the many conquests the *Scots* have made and the many victories they have gained *at Cape Breton, Ticonderoga, Fort Du Quesne and Quebec, in Guadelupe and Martinique, before the walls of Pondicherry and in the plains of Westphalia,* etc., etc., with little assistance from the English. I believe he has omitted but two of our late glories, the victories of *Preston Pans* and *Falkirk,* gained, I own, without the least assistance from the English." Again, the fourth issue [15] was entirely occupied by a fictitious letter to the editor from "your loving countryman," asking him to arrange a place for him, but not a title, as these were being flung about too freely now, and remarking,

> In our disputes with the English there hath always been one subject, our *poverty,* with which they have so *illiberally* and *falsely* reproached us. If truth and reason can be attended to amidst clamour and prejudice, we might produce numberless instances how improperly we are charged in this respect. I shall only mention two. When Lord Darnley was married to Mary, Queen of Scots, he applied to the *City of Edinburgh* for a loan, and we can make it appear by unquestionable authority, however incredible it may seem to our English readers, that the City

* "It was noticed by the opposition papers of the day, that out of sixteen names in one list of gazette promotions there were eleven Stuarts and four McKenzies"—Note to the *Prophecy of Famine* in the 1804 edition of Churchill's works. Stuart was Lord Bute's family name.

† *North Briton,* No. 30: "Every person brought in by the Duke of Newcastle is to be turned out—except the King."

of Edinburgh alone agreed to advance, and did actually raise for his use, even at that time, the entire sum of *twenty pounds;* and at this day it is a known truth, that the *kingdom of Scotland alone pays near half as much as the whole county of York.* If these instances are not thought sufficient to remove the objection, we will at least promise our good friends the English to remove it at their cost; and we hope in a short time to give them more reason to complain of our being rich than ever they had to reproach us with being poor.

Even when the journal was not wholly devoted to satirizing the Scots, it rarely failed to deal backhand blows at them and the Jacobites. Entries like these occurred in its imaginary "Chronicle" of the future:[16]

Some time since died Mr. John Bull, a very worthy plain honest old gentleman of Saxon descent. He was choaked by inadvertently swallowing a thistle which he had placed by the way of ornament on top of his sallad.

Strict orders are issued forth to prohibit the use of calves' or cods' heads from the 29th to the 31st of January, both inclusive. *

It was not without reason that Charles Churchill, who was sub-editor of the *North Briton,* and editor in Wilkes' absence,† wrote to him, "'Hated by knaves and knaves to hate' may not be your motto but will undoubtedly be your fate through life."[17] His patron, Temple, had not only countenanced but instigated the publication of the *North Briton;* he supplied the two journalists with information and guidance. "Characters so rash and impudent," said Horace Walpole,[18] "were proper vehicles of his spite; and he enjoyed the two points he preferred even to power—vengeance, and a whole skin." But he was early made uneasy and in June wrote to

* This refers to the date of the execution of Charles I, and the dinners once held by the "Calves' Head Club."

† *English Liberty,* II, 371. Churchill wrote several numbers, but in general Wilkes wrote the journal while Churchill supervised the printing and corrected the copy, if necessary. See Wilkes' letters to the printer, Kearsley, in the Guildhall Mss., Vol. I.

Wilkes[19] suggesting that it might be wise to close down the *North Briton*. He disliked the attacks on the Scots and in particular was alarmed at "Lord B's. name at full length" for, unlike the usual timid pamphleteer, Wilkes had spelled out in full the names of his adversaries.[20] Wilkes, who was never so subservient as his patron expected, declined to be silenced, but reaffirmed his respect for Temple, saying that he felt as when "my father was called in to whip me."[21]

If we compare the *North Briton* with other journals which have had serious political effects, as, for example, Cobbett's *Political Register,* we notice at once its limited sphere of attack. Cobbett conducted a war, Wilkes a Fronde. There is nothing in the *North Briton* to compare with Cobbett's exposure of the greed and robbery of the landlords and fundholders. Wilkes was not present at the death of an old social system, nor dealing with a society in convulsion. There is nothing whatever in the *North Briton* about social conditions or economics in the modern sense. Neither is there much about ordinary politics; the attack is chiefly upon Lord Bute's foreign policy. The pusillanimity of the ministry is continually contrasted with the vigor of Pitt, and readers are invited to compare the trivial advantages secured by Bute's peace with the wide accessions of territory on which Pitt would have insisted. (To Wilkes is ascribed an epigram on the peace which has often done service since: "It is certainly the peace of God, because it passeth all understanding.") In so doing, of course, Wilkes was appealing intentionally to the economic interests of a class which he already regarded as potential supporters—the London merchants. They were vexed at the disappearance of the prospect of great colonial gains and consequent monopolies; they suspected Bute and the king of being actuated, not by indolence, but by deliberate desire to injure

the interests of a great and insubordinate city. Wilkes in November [22] ascribed to Bute, in a satirical dialogue, a Lycurgan principle in making the peace. He represented him as instructing his envoy to make terms that would repress "luxuriance" arising from extensive trade. "We are rich—too rich—very rich"; sugar, in particular, causes "gout, stone, phthistic, sciatical, cholera, hot, cold, wet and dry disorders," and the earl's last instructions are "Remember, my lord, *trade, the bane of our nation.*" On the publication of the ratified preliminary articles of peace [23] Wilkes analyzed and condemned them in detail, and an especial object of his attack was the failure to secure a monopoly of the Newfoundland fisheries. Yet, even in this most serious attempt to enlist the support of the City, Wilkes could not resist a joke, and risked everything [24] in the middle of a genuine and ample praise of Lord Mayor Beckford's attack on the peace, to insert a sidelong allusion to his imperfect grammar: "THIS HERE lord Mayor of London in an *elegant* and *masterly* speech, publicly declared *that the present peace was in every respect more infamous than that of Utrecht; and that he was ready to prove* THAT THERE *peace was* LESSER *to be found fault with.*"

It was by a practical joke connected with the treaty that the *North Briton* extinguished the *Auditor,* its other governmental rival, edited by the obscure writer Arthur Murphy. The *Auditor* was deluded into publishing in good faith, and editorially upholding, a letter from a *soi-disant* traveler who denounced the critics of the treaty for pretending that Florida was an acquisition of no value. On the contrary, he said, its extensive marshes would provide plenty of peat; which could then be used for the sugar planters of Barbadoes and the West Indies, to enable them to have fires in their bedrooms, which they now were scarcely ever able to do.[25] The chorus

of ridicule which the *North Briton* led as soon as it found its hoax had succeeded silenced the unfortunate Murphy within a few weeks.

The *North Briton's* conflicts, in this guerilla campaign, naturally enough partook of this character of single combats with prominent supporters of the government. Its twelfth number "took on" Dr. Johnson, who despite his abuse of *pensions* and *pensioners* in his *Dictionary* had now himself accepted a pension and become a government writer; Wilkes suggested that he had better, in the circumstances, be given a place at the Board of Excise, since he had described *excise* in his Dictionary as "a hateful tax levied upon commodities and adjudged not by the common judges of property but wretches hired by those to whom excise is paid." [26] This was not the first time Wilkes had pilloried the *Dictionary* and the Doctor; on the first appearance of the lexicon he had discovered in it the statement "The letter H seldom, perhaps never, begins any but the first syllable" and had published as a commentary a note beginning: "The author of this remark must be a man of quick appre-hension and compre-hensive genius; but I can never forgive his un-handsome be-haviour to the poor knighthood, priest-hood and widow-hood, nor his in-humanity to all man-hood." [27] Another famous enemy he made at this time was Hogarth. The artist went over to the side of the government, for financial reasons, and issued, despite private remonstrances, a dull cartoon entitled, "The Times," and directed against Pitt and Temple. Wilkes, as he had warned Hogarth, devoted a whole Number (17) to ridiculing Hogarth, both his merit as a painter and his new appointment as "serjeant-painter" to the king: "I think the term means what is vulgarly called house-painter." [28] Wilkes himself never bore malice from his encounters and he believed that Ho-

garth had forgiven him. "Mr. Hogarth says," he wrote to Temple,[29] "I am a thorough good-humoured fellow, only Pitt-bitten." But the artist was only waiting his time; when Wilkes appeared before Lord Chief Justice Pratt in 1763 Hogarth joined the crowd in court, and lurking behind pillars and taking rapid sketches, he produced and published his venomous cartoon, "John Wilkes, Esq., Drawn from Life," which is reproduced on the jacket of this book. Wilkes was ugly enough, but the injured pride of the artist has distorted his face till it is subhuman: that monstrous squint and bestial leer, though they have been taken by after ages as a true portrait, surely never appeared on a human face. Wilkes himself took the blow placidly:[30] "I never heard," he wrote, "that he [Wilkes] once hung over the glassy stream like another Narcissus. . . . I fancy he finds himself tolerably happy in the *clay cottage* to which he is *tenant for life* because he has learnt to keep it in good order. While the share of health and animal spirits which heaven has given him shall hold out, I can scarcely imagine he will be one moment peevish about the *outside* of so precarious, so temporary a habitation, or will even be brought to own *ingenium Galbæ male habitat —Monsieur est mal logé.*"

Almost till the end, friendship made Wilkes keep his hands off his fellow monks of Medmenham, though one of them, Dashwood, was the most grotesquely vulnerable figure in the government. Wilkes had genially laughed at the appointment as chancellor of a man who had spent his life "puzzling over tavern bills," but not more so than Dashwood himself, who had written to Wilkes, "I can tell you what will make you wonder, and that very justly, when you hear that His Majesty has been pleased to appoint me his Chancellor of the Exchequer."[31] They had remained good friends and Dashwood

had recommended Wilkes to the colonelcy of the Bucks militia, an appointment which gave him the red coat so long his favorite attire. But the incompetence of Dashwood was too attractive a target to be avoided forever. In his budget, which had little to commend it, he included a proposal for an excise on cider, which at once turned against him the gentlemen representing Hereford and other cider-producing counties.* He defended himself, to a House which piqued itself on elegance of language, in phrases which the *North Briton* would have been more than human had it not reproduced.† He explained *"he was not for an extension of the excise laws but for an enlargement of them,"* he observed that *"all the whole total* is *anything for peace and quietness' sake,"* and urged his critics to "take the thing *rough as it runs.*" His lamentable failure greatly assisted in securing the resignation of Bute a month later; no political opponent could have failed to take some advantage of it, but Wilkes' use of it was limited and almost good-humored. To one only of his old associates was Wilkes frankly bitter, and he was the one who could fairly be described as a renegade. There exists a letter in Wilkes' correspondence—no doubt preserved by him as a *pièce justificative*—from Paul Whitehead, in which he announces to Wilkes his decision to abandon his democratic principles. The floridity and violence of the phrasing do not conceal and are not meant to conceal the purely mercenary motive.

> May I (can worse disgrace on manhood fall?)
> Be born a Whitehead and baptized a Paul!

* That there was such a tax at all was due to his own inability to explain the intricacies of a linen tax to the House (D. A. Winstanley, *Personal and Party Government,* p. 113).

† *North Briton,* March 19th, 1763. The quoted phrases are from the *North Briton,* with its italics, which represent Dashwood's exact words.

wrote Churchill. At the beginning of April, 1763,* Wilkes struck at the new defender of despotism: "He who was ever a licentious asserter of privileges, whose tongue was loudest in every mob to resound their rights, and to vindicate the liberty of the press, who treated nobles with impunity and trampled on the sacred majesty of crowns," said the *North Briton* quite truly, had become "an advocate of despotism" now that his "dull patron" was "a *court Jacobite.*"

An endeavor has been made [32] to excuse the attempt, which soon followed, by other Medmenham monks to ruin Wilkes. It has been argued that Sandwich, the chief agent of the persecution, who had been drinking in Wilkes' company at a loose club held weekly at the top of Covent Garden theater a fortnight before the storm burst,[33] was justified in his hostility by a somewhat scandalous squib found in Wilkes' papers, which, it is assumed, he had not till then seen. It is preserved in the Guildhall Mss.,[34] and cannot be printed in full. It is typical of the occasional and trivial obscene writing in which Wilkes' circle indulged. It is a mock "instruction" to the Earl of Sandwich on his appointment as Ambassador to the Spanish court. He is to make Wilkes his secretary because of his religious orthodoxy. He is to take various coarsely detailed precautions to preserve his energy on the boat; in Spain he is not to fight duels. "We most expressly restrain you to make all your thrusts at the women. . . . I hope . . . you will first carry the breastwork, then take the demilune and at last plant your victorious standard in the citadel of every fair Donna. . . . Your Lordship's great ancestor unfortunately was lost, for in the last wonderfull achievement he went to the bottom." This, it is sug-

* April 2nd, 1763. The last words of the quotation are, presumably, a reflexion on Dashwood.

gested, was a private sneer at Sandwich's courage and excused his later vehemence in hunting down Wilkes. It is difficult, for any one who has studied Wilkes' and Potter's literary productions or knows anything of the Medmenham monks, to believe this. It is far more likely that Sandwich had long been aware of it, and had laughed with the others when it was read. The thing was once mildly amusing, though now it is dull; it contains no malice and its only charge is one of lecherousness which Sandwich merited and would have taken as a compliment. If we are to seek among Wilkes' jests for a cause for Sandwich's enmity, we had much better choose his famous repartee: "Wilkes," said Sandwich, "you will die of a pox or on the gallows."—"That depends, my lord, on whether I embrace your principles or your mistress."

Months before he had broken with the Medmenham monks, Wilkes believed or affected to believe, on the news of the prosecution of the *Monitor,* that he was in some danger. "Almost every man I meet looks strangely on me," said the *North Briton* of December 4th; "some industriously avoid me—others pass me silent—stare—and shake their heads. Those few, those very few, who are not afraid to take a lover of his country by the hand, congratulate me on my being alive and at Liberty. They advise circumspection—for, they do not know—they cannot tell—but—the times—Liberty is precious—fines—imprisonment—pillory—not indeed that they themselves—but—then in truth—God only knows—."

The fears which Wilkes expressed were not deeply felt. So far from practicing caution, he was a *franc tireur* whose daring alarmed his own side. He had not only written most vehemently in the *Monitor,* another anti-governmental journal, but had pressed Arthur Beardmore, its editor and a client of Temple, to challenge a general warrant issued against it

on the ground that such warrants were illegal. Beardmore declined; the warrant was made special; nor for some time did it seem that the authorities were likely to proceed to "fines—imprisonment—pillory."

Personal antagonism threatened Wilkes more seriously. The Earl of Bute's schoolboy son called him "a goggled-eyed son of a bitch." This distressing event was misreported in the *Auditor,* and from it Wilkes secured a disproportionate amount of favorable publicity. In August, 1762, he entangled himself in a more serious quarrel. Among the supporters of the government was a young aristocrat, Lord Talbot, short-tempered, vain, and arrogant. At the coronation of King George III the previous year (1761), he had distinguished himself as Lord Steward by general inept behavior and one exceedingly ridiculous incident, greeted by handclapping from the spectators. "Lord Talbot," wrote Horace Walpole,[35] "piqued himself on backing his horse down the hall and not turning its rump towards the king, but he had taken such pains to dress it to that duty that it entered backwards" and thus presented no especially respectful appearance to His Majesty. He also insulted the representatives of the City of London by refusing them a table in the hall, and then climbed down before an open threat from Beckford. He lectured Lord Bute on the way to conduct foreign policy, saying, according to Walpole, "If I were a minister, thus I would talk to France, Spain, to the Dutch—none of your half measures." In short he made a great fool of himself at a time when to a snob it was most painful to do so; and his acquaintances saw to it that he knew it. Therefore, when on August 21st, 1762, the *North Briton* made a facetious reference to the Lord Steward's horse, Talbot's feelings were raw enough for him to write a curt letter demanding of Wilkes if he were the

writer. Wilkes answered haughtily, asking by what right Talbot questioned him; Talbot who, though a decent enough young man at bottom, was extremely hot-tempered, had no intention of withdrawing, and pressed on until, after the exchange of seven letters, a duel was arranged. To the last minute Wilkes declined to take the matter seriously; he suggested that the two seconds and two principals should form a *partie carrée* for dinner at Bagshot before the duel, and when this had been rejected, rolled up on the evening direct from an orgy with the Medmenham monks. On arrival he was sobered by Lord Talbot's manner and he wrote a short note to Temple leaving him the charge of his daughter Polly. Of the duel itself Wilkes wrote later a characteristically graphic letter to his patron:

Red Lion at Bagshot
Tuesday, 10 at night, 1762.

My Lord:

I had the honour of transmitting to your lordship copies of seven letters which passed between Lord Talbot and me. As the affair is now over, I enclose an original letter of Colonel Berkeley, with a copy of mine previous to it, which fixed the particulars of our meeting, and therefore remained a secret, very sacredly kept by the four persons concerned.

I came here at three this afternoon; and about five I was told that Lord Talbot and Colonel Berkeley were in the house. Lord Talbot had been here at one, and was gone again; leaving a message, however, that he would soon return. I had continued in the room where I was at my first coming, for fear of raising suspicion. I sent a compliment to Colonel Berkeley, and that I wished to see him. He was so obliging as to come to me directly. I told him that I supposed we were to sup together with Lord Talbot, whom I was ready to attend, as became a private gentleman; and that he and Mr. Harris, as our seconds, would settle the business of the next morning, according to my letter to him from Winchester, and his answer. Berkeley said that his lordship desired to finish the business immediately. I replied that the appointment was to sup together that evening, and to fight in the morning; that, in

consequence of such an arrangement, I had, like an idle man of pleasure, put off some business of real importance which I meant to settle before I went to bed. I added that I was come from Medmenham Abbey, where the jovial monks of St. Francis had kept me up till four in the morning; that the world would therefore conclude I was drunk, and form no favourable opinion of his lordship from a duel at such a time; that it more became us both to take a cool hour of the next morning, as early a one as was agreeable to Lord Talbot. Berkeley said that he had undertaken to bring us together; and as we were now both at Bagshot, he would leave us to settle our own business. He then asked me if I would go with him to Lord Talbot. I said I would, any moment he pleased. We went directly, with my adjutant, Mr. Harris.

I found Lord Talbot in an agony of passion. He said that I had injured, that I had insulted him, that he was not used to be injured or insulted; what did I mean? Did I, or did I not, write the *North Briton* of August 1, which had affronted his honour? He would know; he insisted on a direct answer; here were his pistols. I replied that he would soon use them; that I desired to know by what right his lordship catechised me about a paper which did not bear my name; that I should never resolve him that question till he made out his right of putting it; and that if I could have entertained any other idea, I was too well-bred to have given his lordship and Colonel Berkeley the trouble of coming to Bagshot. I observed that I was a private English gentleman, perfectly free and independent, which I held to be a character of the highest dignity; that I obeyed with pleasure a gracious sovereign, but would never submit to the arbitrary dictates of a fellow-subject, a Lord Steward of his household; my superior indeed in rank, fortune, and abilities, but my equal only in honour, courage, and liberty.

Lord Talbot then asked me if I would fight him that evening. I said that I preferred the next morning, as it had been settled before; and gave my reasons. His lordship replied that he insisted on finishing the affair immediately. I told him that I should very soon be ready; that I did not mean to quit him, but would absolutely first settle some important business relative to the education of an only daughter, whom I tenderly loved; that it would take up a very little time, and I would immediately settle the affair in any way he chose, for I had brought both sword and pistols. I rung the bell for pen, ink, and paper; desiring his lordship to conceal his pistols, that they might not be seen by the waiter. He soon after became half frantic; and made use of a thousand indecent expressions, that I should be hanged, damned, etc. I said that I was not to be frightened, nor in the least affected by such violence; that God

had given me a firmness and spirit equal to his lordship's or any man's; that cool courage should always mark me, and that it would be seen how well-bottomed I was.

After the waiter had brought pen, ink, and paper, I proposed that the door of the room might be locked, and not opened till our business was decided. Lord Talbot, upon this proposition, became quite outrageous; declared that this was mere butchery, and that I was a wretch who sought his life. I reminded him that I came there on a point of honour, to give his lordship satisfaction; that I mentioned the circumstances of locking the door only to prevent all possibility of interruption; and that I would in every circumstance be governed, not by the turbulence of the most violent temper I had ever seen, but by the calm determinations of our two seconds, to whom I implicitly submitted. Lord Talbot then asked me if I would deny the paper. I answered, that I neither would own or deny it; if I survived, I would afterwards declare; not before. Soon after, he grew a little cooler; and in a soothing tone of voice said, "I have never, I believe, offended Mr. Wilkes; why has he attacked me? He must be sorry to see me unhappy." I asked, upon what grounds his lordship imputed the paper to me; that Mr. Wilkes would justify any paper to which he had put his name, and would equally assert the privilege of not giving any answer whatever about a paper to which he had not; that this was my undoubted right, which I was ready to seal with my blood. He then said he admired me exceedingly, really loved me; but I was an unaccountable animal; such parts! but would I kill him, who had never offended me? Etc., etc.

We had after this a good deal of conversation about the Buckingham militia; and the day his lordship came to see us on Wycomb's Heath, before I was Colonel. He soon after flamed out again, and said to me, "You are a murderer, you want to kill me; but I am sure that I shall kill you; I know I shall, by God. If you will fight, if you kill me, I hope you will be hanged: I know you will." Berkeley and Harris were shocked. I asked, if I was first to be killed, and afterwards hanged; that I knew his lordship fought me with the King's pardon in his pocket, and I fought him with a halter about my neck; that I would fight him for all that, and if he fell, I should not tarry here a moment for the tender mercies of such a ministry, but would directly proceed to the next stage, where my valet-de-chambre waited for me, and from thence I would make the best of my way to France, for men of honour were sure of protection in that kingdom. He seemed much affected by this. He told me that I was an unbeliever, and wished to be killed. I could not help smiling at this; and observed that we did not meet at Bagshot

to settle articles of faith, but points of honour; that indeed I had no fear of dying, but I enjoyed life as much as any man in it; that I was as little subject to be gloomy, or even peevish, as any Englishman whatever; that I valued life, and the fair enjoyments of it, so much I would never quit it by my own consent, except on a call of honour.

I then wrote a letter to your lordship, respecting the education of Miss Wilkes; and gave you my poor thanks for the steady friendship with which you have so many years honoured me. Colonel Berkeley took care of the letter, and I have since desired him to send it to Stowe;* for the sentiments of the heart at such a moment are beyond all politics, and indeed everything else but such virtue as Lord Temple's.

When I had sealed my letter, I told Lord Talbot that I was entirely at his service; and I again desired that we might decide the affair in the room, because there could not be a possibility of interruption; but he was quite inexorable. He then asked me, how many times we should fire. I said, that I left to his choice; I had brought a flask of powder, and a bag of bullets. Our seconds then charged the pistols which my lord had brought; they were large horse-pistols. It was agreed we should fire at the word of command, to be given by one of our seconds. They tossed up, and it fell to my adjutant to give the word. We then left the inn, and walked to a garden at some distance from the house. It was near seven, and the moon shone very bright. We stood about eight yards distant, and agreed not to turn round before we fired, but to continue facing each other. Harris gave the word. Both our fires were in very exact time, but neither took effect. I walked up immediately to Lord Talbot, and told him that I now avowed the paper. His lordship paid me the highest encomiums on my courage, and said he would declare everywhere that I was the noblest fellow God had ever made. He then desired that we might now be good friends, and retire to the inn to drink a bottle of claret together; which we did with great good humour, and much laughter. Lord Talbot afterwards went to Windsor; Berkeley and Harris to Winchester; and I continue here till tomorrow morning, waiting the return of my valet-de-chambre, to whom I have sent a messenger. Berkeley told me, that he was grieved for Lord Talbot's passion, and admired my courage and coolness beyond his farthest idea; that was his expression.

I have a million of other particulars to relate; but I blush already at the length of this letter.

Your lordship will soon see Colonel Berkeley; and I hope in a very

* Lord Temple's seat.

few days to pay my devoirs at Stowe. I intend to be at Aylesbury quarter-sessions by Thursday dinner.

My most respectful compliments always attend Lady Temple.

I am ever,

My dear Lord,

Your Lordship's very devoted and obedient humble servant,

JOHN WILKES.

The news of the duel—Wilkes later saw to the publication of the actual letter *—greatly increased his popularity; but the advantages he took from this were again purely personal. "A most favourite object," he wrote to Temple,[36] "whom I have unsuccessfully made tenders to ever since I saw her here [Winchester] now whispers me that she will trust her honour at the first Shepherd's minute to a man who takes such care of his own." Indeed, Temple thought it necessary to pull him up sharply: on October 17th he told him to stop writing him snippets of scandalous verse and "give yourself up to Parliamentary labours"; on the 21st, more abruptly, he said, "You have sent me lately several scraps of verses: I would beg of you to send me no more." [37]

It was at this time that Henry Fox, the paymaster, had been admitted into the cabinet as a counterpoise to George Grenville and as agent of a wholesale system of bribery. The power and purse of the king, greater than those of any of the dukes, was thrown into the scale. "A shop was publicly opened in the Pay Office whither members flocked and received the wages of their venality in bank bills," wrote Walpole. Loans were jobbed so as to secure profits for the new supporters; on March 19th, 1763, the *North Briton* gave de-

* And thereby much annoyed both Temple and Talbot. For it was published at a time when Talbot had voted with the minority. He was so irritated that he charged Temple with publishing it and attempted to fight him; see an expostulatory note to Wilkes dated July 3rd, 1767, in Add. Ms. 30869.

tails of the floating of a £3,500,000 loan in such a way as to give a clear present of £350,000 to "minister's friends" to whom stock was issued at a low rate.[38] Personal government by the king through his favorite seemed on a fair way to establishment, and the pen of Wilkes was needed by his party. The *North Briton* fiercely attacked one of the chief distributors of bribes, Samuel Martin, M.P., "the most treacherous, base, selfish, mean, abject, lowlived and dirty fellow that ever *wriggled* himself into a secretaryship"; and exposed his share in a gross instance of corruption.[39] John Ghest, inspector at Bremen for the army, by instruction had rejected large quantities of bad and mildewed oats which were being sent up river for the use of the army. This deprived the contractors of large profits on which they had calculated and for which they had no doubt paid the usual *douceurs*. They complained: one Pownal was sent over to supervise Ghest: he lifted the ban on oats and removed the detachment of soldiers which had secured respect for Ghest's orders. The oats went through uninspected and unchecked, and Ghest was innocent enough to report to Martin, who ignored his letter but passed through to Pownal the hint to dismiss Ghest.

After the agent, Wilkes attacked the principal. On March 15th he published a satirical introduction to Ben Jonson's play, *The Fall of Mortimer*. In form, it was a dedication to Lord Bute. Roger Mortimer, the murderer of Edward II and favorite of his queen Isabella, ruled England for three years over the head of Edward III. "I absolutely disclaim the most distant allusion," observed Wilkes maliciously. "History does not furnish a more striking contrast than there is between the two ministers in the reigns of Edward the Third and George the Third." The whole pamphlet, ably written, was a scarcely veiled comparison between Mortimer and Bute.

"It is wormwood," said Horace Walpole delightedly. Wilkes pointed out how Edward III "was held in the most absolute slavery by his mother and his minister, the first nobles of England were excluded from the king's councils and the minion disposed of all places of profit and trust." What is believed to have vexed the king above all, and to have provided an honorable excuse for his later rancor was not the exposure of the system of corruption, or of the expulsion of the Whig aristocracy, or even the insinuation of his own imbecility, but the implicit suggestion of a guilty relation between his mother and the handsome Lord Bute.* The people of London had already made the same accusation, and soon afterward expressed it punningly in the public burnings of a boot and a petticoat. Wilkes had at last struck at the center of the attacks on the Whigs. He underlined his insolence by references to Bute's desire to pose as a Mæcenas, his patronage of singularly inferior writers, his inability to spell, and his amateur theatricals. "Let me intreat your Lordship to assist your friend [Murphy] in perfecting the weak scenes of this tragedy. . . . It is the warmest wish of my heart that the Earl of Bute may speedily complete the story of Roger Mortimer. . . . Such a work will immortalize your name in the literary as the peace of Versailles will in the political world; and wherever the name of Roger Mortimer shall be mentioned, that of Bute will follow to the latest times." He even insinuated, as was not entirely untrue, that the effective work of the government was completely neglected by Lords Bedford, Halifax, Egremont, Gower, Henley, Mansfield and Ligonier, and Messrs. Grenville and Fox, and in fact left to the industry of little-admired retainers, like

* Whether the suggestion was true or not is uncertain. Lord Waldegrave apparently believed it: see his *Memoirs,* pp. 38, 39, and D. A. Winstanley, *Personal and Party Government,* p. 28.

Gilbert Elliott and Alexander Wedderburn, the lawyer. "It is usual," he said with a final audacity to Jeremiah Dyson, a government hack, "to give dedicators something. I wish you would put his lordship in mind of it." [40]

Because no government action followed this, Wilkes assumed an even wider latitude. He felt he had tried "the temper of the Court by his paper on Mortimer, and found they did not dare touch him." [41] Early the next month, when visiting Paris hurriedly to arrange for the education of his daughter, he was asked by Madame Pompadour, "How far does the liberty of the press extend in England?" "I do not know. I am trying to find out," he answered. He spoke, as he believed, with victory in his pocket. He had already ended the last regular number of the *North Briton* (April 2nd) with the words "we may safely conclude that a change is at hand." Six days later, hindered by his unpopularity and having, as he thought, completed his work for his master, Lord Bute abruptly resigned office.

Intense satisfaction filled the hearts of all those who still ascribed the new policy not to the king but to his entourage. If this were so, Mortimer had fallen, and the popular rejoicings were justified. But Wilkes shared this delight, if at all, for a few days only. On April 13th an advertisement signed by the *North Briton* appeared in the papers, expressing uncertainty as to the future and asking if Lord Bute did not really control from behind the scenes as much as ever. Wilkes was in the confidence of Temple and through him, of Pitt, both of whom had good reason for disquietude. Temple always had treated Wilkes more familiarly than many of his supporters. As early as October of 1761 he had explained at length to him why it was quite right for Pitt to have accepted a pension—a courtesy he would hardly have afforded

Beardmore the attorney or Almon the bookseller.[42] Pitt had received Wilkes in 1762 at his bedside at Hayes and discussed with him the faults of the peace, even, apparently, dictating or suggesting notes for its denunciation in the *North Briton*.[43] The two politicians, therefore, naturally turned to him as soon as their suspicions were confirmed. George Grenville, Temple's brother, accepted office on Bute's fall, expressly on the ground that he wished to liberate the king from his dependence on the great Whig families. No reason could have more pleased George III or more alarmed Pitt and Temple. Requiring some small Parliamentary aid which his brother alone could afford him, the new Prime Minister sent to Temple, as a courtesy, an advance copy of the forthcoming king's speech. Pitt and Temple studied it together: it confirmed every suspicion. On foreign policy, at this time the chief source of their discontent, it was an echo of Bute. Its encomiums on the peace, and the claims it made for it, seemed to them mendacious as well as insulting. They were stung to fury, and decided to loose Wilkes on Grenville as they had loosed him on Bute. Their opinion of the speech was communicated to him, and certainly with Temple's connivance, quite possibly with Pitt's, Wilkes wrote and published the famous Number 45 of the *North Briton* on April 23rd.

IV

"Number 45"

Excessive respect to the king, rather than violent sedition, seems to us to-day the chief characteristic of Number 45 of the *North Briton.* Any possibility of a suggestion of a personal insult in criticizing the king's speech was carefully avoided. "The king's speech," the writer observed, "has always been considered by the legislature and by the public at large as the speech of the minister," and a respectable array of precedents in a footnote supported the conclusion that this speech might be criticized as well as another. Indeed, the gravamen of the charge was that the ministers themselves had insulted the king by abusing their position to put lies into the mouth of a virtuous prince.

The king's speech had described the peace as "honourable to my crown and beneficial to my people." This Wilkes claimed to be a falsehood, when compared with the hopes of the city merchants and the large concessions on which Pitt would have insisted. The speech also referred to "the happy effects which the several allies of my crown have derived" from the peace. This indeed was trailing a coat. Peace had been secured by the refusal of a pledged subsidy to the King of Prussia and the practical abandonment of that ally to France. Wilkes also indicated that the ratification of peace had been obtained by bribery, which was on the whole a notorious fact, and he further claimed that the new ministry was only the shadow of Lord Bute. (In fact, until George Grenville peremptorily insisted on his abandoning the

practice, the king did continue privately to consult Bute.) Finally, a certain phrase in Number 45 perhaps may be regarded as incendiary, a phrase in which Wilkes describes the ministers as "the tools of despotism and corruption," and warns them, "They have sent the spirit of discord through the land and I will prophecy it will never be extinguished but by the extinction of their power."

It was not the text of the *North Briton* which was the real motive of the attack now decided upon by the government, it was the past offenses to George III and the clear indication that Grenville's ministry was to be spared no more than Bute's. The authorities decided to proceed by "general warrant"—that is, a warrant not naming the person to be arrested but merely indicating his offense. They were uneasy about this, for attacks had been recently made upon such warrants and it was on record that in 1680 Scroggs had been impeached[1] for granting them. They therefore consulted formally Charles Yorke, the Attorney-General, who also consulted his father, the famous lawyer and strong opponent of the government, Lord Hardwicke. Both assured them that such warrants were unquestionably legal.[2]

The date of Number 45 was April 23rd, the date of the execution of the general warrant was April 30th. The week was concerned in events discomfortable to the government. Wilkes was ready for them, as he had proposed already (November, 1762) to Beardmore of the *Monitor* to fight a general warrant and prosecute Lord Halifax, the Secretary of State.[3] Moreover, the government's agents were not in the least inclined to tackle so vicious an adversary. Nathan Carrington, their most trusted runner, fell unaccountably ill, and his letter of excuse, signed in far too wobbly a hand to be convincing, is in the Guildhall records. That the issue of a

"general warrant" was not merely a technical grievance was shown by the action of the constables and messengers, who arrested, sometimes dragging them from their beds, as many as forty-eight[4] persons before they seized Wilkes. They even took an unfortunate printer, Dryden Leach, who had long ago ceased to print the *North Briton.* They captured easily enough Balfe and Kearsley, Wilkes' later printers, and from the information which these formally gave, felt themselves at last safe in attempting to catch Wilkes himself.

The officers posted themselves outside his house on the night of April 29th but did not arrest him when he returned, giving later the excuse that he was "in liquor." This charming chivalry can hardly explain their similar supineness early next morning when Wilkes passed both Blackmore and Watson, the chief messengers, with no more than a remark that he would come back to breakfast. He hurried down to Balfe's printing shop in the Strand, broke in by a first-story window, and "dissed" the type of Number 46 of the *North Briton.* He also, it is said, tore up the original copy for Number 45 and any other compromising papers he could find.[5] He then strolled nonchalantly back home.

As he turned into Great George Street he was met, as he had anticipated, by the king's messengers. He was by now perfectly prepared. He demanded to see the warrant; he found "it was against the authors, printers, and publishers of the *North Briton,* Number 45." The chief messenger said that his verbal orders were to arrest Wilkes. Wilkes indignantly declared that this warrant was no warrant: "I asked why he would serve it on me, rather than on the Lord Chancellor, or either of the Secretaries, on Lord Bute, or Lord Corke, or my next-door neighbour." When the man made a motion which suggested force, Wilkes threatened to run

him through if he touched him, and induced the messenger to enter his house to discuss the matter. This was, of course, just what Wilkes wished. He argued the question interminably with the wretched messenger and the additional messengers and assistants who arrived; he sent for his friends and embraced them in the argument. Accident nearly played into the government's hands: Charles Churchill, for whom the officers were also searching, walked innocently into the house. Fortunately, the messengers did not recognize him: before he could give himself away, Wilkes' quick wit saved him: "Good morrow, *Mr. Thomson,*" he said with distinctness. "How does Mrs. Thomson do to-day? Does she dine *in the country?*" Churchill's heavy face lit up with intelligence: Mrs. Thomson's need to dine in the country was such, he said, that he could do no more than pay his respects to Wilkes and pass on. No sooner was he out of the house than he pelted home, collected his papers and fled from London; nor were the messengers able to track him down.

Meanwhile, Wilkes sent out some of his friends to the Court of Common Pleas to secure a writ for *habeas corpus* on the ground that he was detained a prisoner in his own house, under an illegal warrant. To a personal message from Halifax requesting him to come to visit him at his house, a few steps farther down Great George Street, Wilkes replied regretting that they had not been introduced. He delayed all the morning, until, goaded beyond endurance, the messengers sent for a constable who arrived with a considerable force, and threatened also to bring a platoon of guards if necessary. Wilkes thereupon yielded to *force majeure,* but still he would not walk to Halifax's. To attract the greater attention, he insisted on a sedan-chair being brought; he entered it and was ceremoniously carried from one doorstep to the other.

He was shown into a long room overlooking the park, where everything was arranged, perhaps had been long waiting, to impress him. Lords Halifax and Egremont sat at a table covered with pens, ink and paper; behind them stood the under-secretaries, and on either side, Lovell Stanhope, the law clerk, and Philip Carteret Webb, the Solicitor of the Treasury. But Wilkes was not likely to play the part assigned to him. Upon the first remark from Lord Halifax, he delivered a brief speech which he had prepared, denouncing their violent conduct and informing them that he would at the earliest possible moment raise the matter in Parliament. Lord Halifax spoke to him civilly, Lord Egremont with insolence and contempt—indeed, Egremont was the one man to whom Wilkes ever bore rancor. They attempted to examine him, but he refused to answer, telling them that at the end of the interview "all the quires of paper on their lordships' table should be as milkwhite as at the beginning."[6] It was to his interest to prolong the proceedings, for he knew that a writ of *habeas corpus* had been granted, and hoped that his friends might at any time bring it. He provoked them into bullying him, in order that he might reply, "Indeed, my lords, I am not made of such flimsy stuff." They repeatedly started on their questionnaire—"Mr. Wilkes, do you know Mr. Kearsley? Mr. Wilkes, when did you last see Mr. Kearsley? . . . " securing no answer, except (according to a very doubtful story)[7] that when Halifax asked him whether he had attended the political dinners at which the opposition was reunited, Wilkes is said to have answered that he did not sit down to table but only blew the coals. Halifax finally asked him whether he preferred to be imprisoned in the Tower, Newgate or his house; Wilkes merely answered that he never received obligations except from a friend. Halifax then re-

marked that he would be taken to the Tower. To this Wilkes made no answer at once, but a few minutes later, fixing his gaze as directly as his squint allowed on the sullen Lord Egremont, deliberately insulted him. "Your lordship's verbal orders were to drag me out of my bed at midnight. Your lordship is very ready to issue orders which you have neither the courage to sign nor I believe to justify." Egremont glowered silently, but was too politic to take up the insult. Halifax withdrew, leaving Egremont to watch Wilkes, but he, too, soon followed, exasperated by Wilkes' deliberately unconcerned comments on the beauty of the pictures on the wall.

Outside, the Treasury Solicitor, Webb, was heatedly arguing with two M.P.'s who had brought the news of the granting of the writ of *habeas corpus*. Unfortunately, the writ was made out ordering Blackmore and Watson, the men who arrested Wilkes, to bring him to the Court of Common Pleas. But now Wilkes had passed out of their custody into that of the two Secretaries of State; and Webb argued that the writ could consequently be ignored. However much the Secretaries may previously have been convinced of the legality of general warrants, they must surely by now have begun to be uneasy; nevertheless, they remained obstinate and Wilkes was taken to the Tower, where he was held a close prisoner, and his friends refused admittance to him. Government agents, headed by Webb, meanwhile ransacked his house, throwing into a sack every paper of conceivable interest and carrying it away in a coach.[8]

For the moment, held incommunicado, Wilkes was powerless. He asked to be confined in the room occupied by Egremont's father, the Jacobite Sir William Windham, but the jest was not repeated till later.[9] He wrote a letter to his daughter Polly in France, inquiring after various domestic mat-

ters, and asking her, "Can you get me made *membre du Parlement de Paris?* For that of *Westminster* is losing all its privileges"; but the Governor suppressed it.[10] However, he had powerful friends outside. Temple, on being invited to witness the seizure of Wilkes' papers, declined to be present at an act "too barbarous for any human eye" [11] and withdrew in dramatic wrath, indignant at the audacity of his relative's government and confident in the anger of Lord Chief Justice Pratt, not only at the arbitrariness of the government's action but at the sharp practice by which the *habeas corpus* writ had been evaded. Immediate application was made again to the Court of Common Pleas,* and by order of that body on May 3rd the closeness of Wilkes' imprisonment was relaxed. Visitors were allowed, and a procession of Whig leaders marked the importance which the case was now to take. Among them the most noted perhaps was the Duke of Grafton, who had been vexed by Lord Bute's removing him from the lord lieutenancy of Suffolk. Wilkes mistook his visit for a sign of personal friendship or even possibly for a devotion to principle, an error which was to lead him in later years to a graver mistake. Grafton, to do him justice, gave some warning by writing to Temple [12] asking him to inform Wilkes that he could not go bail for him, as that would be an insult to the king. Major Ransford, the governor of the Tower, had prominently displayed upon his desk a sheet of paper by which he was instructed to take down the names of all those who "applied for admission to Colonel Wilkes." The displeasure of the king was not to be deprived of its least object.

Wilkes made a brief appearance in court on Thursday,

* It would have been more usual to apply to the Court of King's Bench, for *habeas corpus* warrants had not been moved for in Common Pleas since the time of Charles II. But the judge in the King's Bench was Lord Mansfield, a "King's Friend."

May 3rd. He addressed Lord Chief Justice Pratt very briefly; his advocate, Serjeant Glynn, addressed him at greater length. The judge rebuked the messengers for their trickery in evading the first writ of *habeas corpus* and intimated that he would deliver his decision on May 6th. In the meantime Lord Temple, as Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire, received from the government an order to remove Wilkes from his colonelcy in the Bucks militia. The letter in which he did so was most irregular, from the official point of view. "I cannot," he wrote, "help expressing the concern I feel at the loss of an officer, by his deportment in command, endeared to the whole corps." Wilkes replied in a letter couched in equally unsuitable terms, and both were immediately published.[13] The government gained some consolation by removing Temple from his lord lieutenancy. Popular opinion, already moved, was further excited by this exchange of blows, and when the Court of Common Pleas opened on the 6th it was packed with the adherents of both sides. Wilkes had this time prepared a somewhat more effective speech. In an important phrase which shows the path his mind had begun to take, he said,[14] "The liberty of all peers and gentlemen, and, what touches me more sensibly, that of all the middling and inferior set of people, who stand most in need of protection, is in my case this day to be finally decided upon: a question of such importance as to determine at once whether English liberty shall be a reality or a shadow." The rest of his speech was a brief recapitulation of the violence to which he had been subjected. The judge then delivered his opinion. Its opening was unpropitious. His first issue of a writ had borne upon the question of general warrants, and this time he dealt merely with the committal of Wilkes to the Tower. He found that the Secretaries of State had the power of

commitment to prison which an ordinary magistrate possessed. The commitment, therefore, was generally in order, nor was it necessary for the particular passages of the libel to be specified in it. But there arose a third question—Wilkes' privilege as a member of Parliament. The offense with which Wilkes was charged was not treason, felony, nor a breach of the peace, which were the occasions on which this privilege was suspended. He could not accept as adequate the argument that a libel tended towards a breach of the peace, and was therefore a sufficient cause; Wilkes therefore must go free. Wilkes replied in a disjointed speech of thanks; a deafening yell of delight rose from the packed audience and was carried on by the swaying crowd outside, which added to it for the first time the articulate cry of "Wilkes and Liberty!" In the midst of the uproar, with characteristic inefficiency, arrived the Attorney General and Solicitor General, with additional arguments, asking to be heard on the question of privilege; they were curtly told the case was over.[15]

Not his supporters alone, but Wilkes also was beside himself with glee. So public a defeat of the government had to be followed up with fresh onslaughts. Moreover, Wilkes was angry at the violence which he and his house had suffered. His first act was to send this letter to Halifax and Egremont:

My Lords:

On my return here from Westminster Hall, where I had been discharged from my commitment to the Tower under your Lordships' warrant, I find that my house has been robbed and am informed that the stolen goods are in the possession of one or both of your Lordships. I therefore insist that you do forthwith return them to

your humble servant,

John Wilkes.

Great George Street.

He also went to Fielding's office in Bow Street, to appiy for a warrant to search for his property, but John Spinnage, the sitting justice, refused to grant it.* At that time, the routine of a government department, and the mechanical smothering of complaints by official answers, were not so settled and easy as to-day. Wilkes' letter reached directly the persons involved, and Halifax and Egremont were angry and unwise enough to answer. They told him that he had used *"indecent* and *scurrilous* expressions," and that he had published "infamous and seditious libels," and that the Attorney General was going to prosecute him, and that they would keep his papers till they had decided which were proofs of his guilt. Wilkes, delighted, answered them at length, telling them that only his respect for the king whose servants they seemed still to be, even though they had violated English liberty "in the highest and most offensive manner," prevented him from answering their letter "in the same Billingsgate language." "You say," he added, "that such of my papers shall be restored to me as do not lead to a proof of my guilt. I owe this to your apprehension of an action, not to your love of justice; and in that light, if I can believe your Lordships' assurances, the whole will be returned to me." The letters were forthwith printed on a flysheet and posted all over London.[16]

The ministry served on him a subpœna to attend the King's Bench; confident in his privilege he ignored it, and no action was taken.[17] The public delight at his victory seemed at the moment an absolute protection. His phrase of "the middling and inferior set of people," which he picked out and italicized in his subsequent *Letter* of defense to the Aylesbury electors,

* *English Liberty,* p. 90. The story of his altercation with Fielding (Bleackley, *Wilkes,* p. 114) is a fabrication. Incidentally, Wilkes wrote his letter with the approval of Temple and Serjeant Glynn. (Add. Ms. 30866.)

was chosen by a correct instinct. Churchill rapturously recorded its success a few months later in the *Duellist*:

> Hath he not won the vulgar tribes
> By scorning menaces and bribes?
> And proving that his darling cause
> Is of their liberties and laws
> To stand the champion?

His popularity, least among the aristocratic Whigs, who regarded any one not born to their ranks as an adventurer, was great among the merchant class of London, but greatest of all amongst the almost wholly disfranchised working class, which testified its esteem in almost embarrassing ways. Among his papers [18] is a letter of May 19th from a club meeting at the Rose and Crown in Wapping, which announces that at a celebration on his release, the members swore to get drunk every year upon his birthday: unfortunately, they have omitted to find out when his birthday was, and unless he would give them the information "we must either get drunk every day for twelve months or be perjured and d——d."

Wilkes was insistent upon carrying the war into the enemy's country. Lord Temple was continually at his side to advise,[19] but his patron was sufficiently exhilarated by the public humiliation of the government to cease for a little while from advising discretion. In his defense to the Aylesbury electors Wilkes later claimed as his chief services that now "general warrants are absolutely illegal . . . the seizure of papers, except in cases of high treason, has been declared illegal." [20] On these subjects the way was open for further legal action, and, headed by Wilkes, the sufferers from the wild search under the general warrant lightheartedly prosecuted Under-Secretary Wood and the other government servants. There were half a hundred complaints, and the juries were

London juries. Wilkes himself sued only the highest agents, Halifax and Wood. Halifax, using every art of delay, was able to postpone the trial until Wilkes was unable to appear. Wood was able to delay only until December, 1763, when he was fined a thousand pounds, to the great relief of Wilkes' purse. Under the influence of a tide of democratic feeling, the London merchants on the juries took up the high line that oppression or violence to a common working man must be punished severely, and officials were fined two and three hundred pounds for having dragged compositors out of bed. Leach, a master printer, got £400.[21] Wilkes pressed the moral upon Temple: "The trials of last Wednesday and Thursday," he wrote on July 9th,[22] "have demonstrated to me where the strength of our cause really lies; for the merchants, as I had ever the honour of submitting to your Lordship, are firm in the cause of liberty. They refused to bring in a special verdict, though the chief justice wished it, and the attorney general, solicitor general, and three serjeants repeatedly urged it." The government procrastinated as long as it could; eventually it wore down the patience of the remaining journeymen printers, who suspected that Alexander Philipps, their lawyer, was betraying them. They agreed to accept £100 each, provided that the government paid all the legal costs; and at that rate, wrote the government solicitors, the government had saved over a thousand pounds.[23]

Financially as well as politically, Wilkes was dependent upon Temple. He made a serious effort at this time to put his finances in order, by converting his real property into a more negotiable form. He even attempted to regulate his own expenditure, or at least assured Temple that he was doing so, adding in his excuse, "I have never lost sight of the great object of the liberty of the subject at large."[24] Although

Wilkes expected to repay him from the proceeds of his case, and may indeed have done so, Lord Temple, who seems to have invited them, might reasonably have thought the calls on his purse excessive. "I will beg the loan of £200 more," wrote Wilkes on May 25th; on June 6th he accepted "a last sum of £400 or £500 till I can call in my new scrip"; on July 9th he suggested another £500.[25] Temple received in return the respect he demanded, but in little more than words. "Hypocrisy, meanness, ignorance and insolence characterize the king I obey," wrote Wilkes on the same date (incidentally, apparently the only words he ever wrote that were personally directed against George III) . . . "I am my own man, and Lord Temple's"; and he continued by asking, "that your Lordship would give me leave to go for a month to Miss Wilkes at Paris," and also whether or not he would approve of the reprinting of Number 45 of the *North Briton.* Temple disapproved of both projects; but Wilkes had already begun to reprint the *North Briton* and on July 20th went on a visit to Paris, whence he did not return until September 26th. In a letter dated July 26th he attempted to placate Temple, protesting himself willing to forego even his revenge on Halifax and Egremont as soon as Temple, "the entire and absolute master of my conduct and engagements," [26] wished. Temple, who had written and published anonymously a pamphlet upon the case of Wilkes,[27] was inclined to be annoyed, but eventually relented so far as to admit that he had not approved of all Wilkes' acts but would enlarge upon this subject privately. Wilkes shortly afterwards answered by announcing that he had arranged for Temple's pamphlet to be distributed to "the Jury, etc.," in Wood's case, and asking if Temple would purchase from him his estates at a valuation.[28]

Wilkes' brief sojourn in Paris had contained very little of

event. He was confirmed in his optimism by the welcome he received at Canterbury and Dover: he also found on the crossing "the English sailors no enemies to *Wilkes and Liberty*." [29] He compared the poverty of the French provinces with the luxury of Paris, and prophesied a revolution.[30] A peculiar incident occurred to him in Paris on August 15th, which, though it made a great stir at the time and served to vindicate his courage, appears to have had little or no political importance. A Scotch captain named Forbes attempted to force on him a quarrel, saying that he had insulted the Scotch nation. Wilkes, who suspected an intention of killing him out of hand, declined, stating that he had challenged Lord Egremont and could give satisfaction to no other man till that was settled. Forbes several times attempted, on that day and the next, to force Wilkes into an immediate fight without seconds, and Wilkes' friends warned the police, who issued a warrant for the arrest of Forbes; Forbes fled to England. Within a few days Lord Egremont died, and Wilkes forthwith sent a letter to Forbes, announcing that he would give him satisfaction at Menin, in Austrian Flanders, on September 21st. He arrived at Menin on the day mentioned and awaited Forbes, who never came; after a while he returned, and never heard any more of his challenger.

During his visit to France trouble had been brewed for him. It might have been better for Wilkes if he had attended more closely to Temple's political advice. The difficulties of securing a printer had induced him earlier in the year to set up in Great George Street a printing press of his own. Temple, realizing that this gave the government something to strike at, vehemently dissuaded him.[31] Wilkes, taking a few ineffective precautions, went on, and the press between June 20th and July 27th had reprinted the whole of the *North*

Briton—including, with the merest pretense of expurgation, Number 45. He also, at some date not exactly certain, began, but stopped, the printing of twelve copies of an indecent poem called the *Essay on Woman,* which will be later described. All these proceedings were closely watched by the government. Egremont's death on August 27th, so far from relaxing the energy of the prosecution, intensified it. The king had begun to fret under Grenville's autocratic manner and attempted to pick out singly, for his service as chief minister, Hardwicke, Bedford, and even Pitt. He found to his disappointment that Bedford formally proscribed Bute, and that the others took up a party attitude of "all or none." [32] He thus was forced to replace Egremont by a nonentity, who happened to be Sandwich, the Medmenham monk. The new Secretary of State made an attempt of some kind to purchase Wilkes' silence; early next year we find Wilkes in possession of a letter from R. Rigby, M.P., a universal channel of corruption, promising a government appointment on some unspecified but unacceptable conditions.[33] This may refer to the same event. In any case, after this gesture the new Secretary of State threw himself with his usual industry but with unexpected vigor into the attack on his old friend. Repeatedly in the Wilkes papers, which are preserved at the Guildhall, we find him urgently pressing things forward. It is with more surprise that we see the genial Dashwood joining in the hunt: "Lord Despenser [Dashwood]," wrote Grenville to the solicitor Webb on October 21st, "can get if you apply to him persons to prove Wilkes' handwriting"; [34] but after all, it was Dashwood who in a letter to Grenville in April had suggested the expulsion of Wilkes from the Bucks militia, and Dashwood who, when Temple lost his lord-lieutenancy, took his place.[35] The more discreditable methods used to defeat Wilkes had already

been taken by P. C. Webb: Sandwich can be charged merely with carrying them through with unnecessary zeal until the day—November 5th—when he was able to write joyfully to Grenville, enclosing the last reports of spies set to watch Wilkes all day, and adding that the case was now absolutely complete for the House of Lords. It is worth while comparing this letter with one that precedes it in the Grenville Correspondence, in which Lord North, though a Tory and unscrupulous, declines to play a leading part in the prosecution of Wilkes because he fears it will look like Halifax's personal spite, and because he has "received civilities" from Wilkes.

The case, which was planned in the dark against Wilkes and which burst upon him and his friends with shattering force when Parliament met, had two halves. As for the *North Briton,* Wilkes himself had provided the means. It was necessary only to make an exact comparison of the old edition with the new, in case any changes had been made, which was done.[36] Wilkes could scarcely deny the printing. It was also hoped to prove that the reissue was "a new book"—a double offense. Pamphlets were further prepared justifying the issue of general warrants and the whole course of the prosecution of Wilkes.[37] But the government was not satisfied with that: it was quite possible that either the House of Commons or the law courts would decline to consider this paper a "seditious libel." Among Wilkes' papers the government had found, probably not the original manuscript, but either a rough proof of, or correspondence concerning, a poem called the *Essay on Woman.** If to the prosecution for sedition could be added one for obscenity, Wilkes' supporters,

* Wilkes' alarm at discovering this was shown by his inserting an advertisement in the papers on May 10th: "Speedily will be published 'An Essay on Woman,' by P. C. Webb."

especially those of the middle class, would be shaken and his conviction certain. It has always been considered a most ungenerous and dishonorable action on the part of a lawyer, prosecuting for a political offense, to drag in personal attacks on character, but it is often done when the government has been seriously alarmed. As Wilkes had not published, and had no intention of publishing, the *Essay on Woman,* the government had much difficulty in laying its hands on a copy. That not one of his Medmenham friends should fail to turn on him, Wilkes' fellow monk the Earl of March provided the agent in his chaplain, the Reverend John Kidgell. The story that they told—riddled at once by public contempt—was that Samuel Jennings, a compositor in Wilkes' office, accidentally picked up from the floor a sheet of the *Essay,* that he showed it to a printer named Hassall, who once more showed it to his employer Faden who showed it to Kidgell. Kidgell and Faden (the former, it must be remembered, a dissolute and dishonest clergyman, accused of the vice most persistently attributed to the English clergy) were shocked at its obscenity and secured a complete copy from Michael Curry, Wilkes' foreman printer, whom he had improperly treated.* To even the most naïve it appeared more likely that Kidgell and his subordinates had been for months tempting Wilkes' servants through various of their friends and had at last succeeded in bribing them to betray their master. To us, who have access to some of the government papers,[38] it is clear that the case was not merely worked up by bribery, but that an even more serious crime was committed. As for the bribery, Michael Curry received in all no less than £233. 6s. 8d. Philip Webb, in working up a reply to Wilkes' petition in

* It seems rather from Curry's later deposition (Guildhall Mss., Vol. IV) that he had attempted to blackmail Wilkes and been summarily dismissed.

1768, is clearly afraid that some compromising documents may have escaped, and says that certain of his letters may have "imprudent expressions" owing to his "zeal for obtaining a copy of this detestable book." Such a letter was one to Hassall: "Before Mr. Curry goes, desire him to put down in writing what passed between him, Mr. Faden, and you. . . . I mean by way of justification of Mr. Curry that you may all concur in one story." On July 3rd Halifax wrote a letter to Webb which we can read, introducing "a very honest man" in his pay who had a paper "of great importance to our success in Westminster Hall on Wednesday next" (he is thinking of the printer's cases), which "he extracted from the brief which Wilkes' attorney or attorney's clerk showed him, but this must be a *profound secret* as the knowledge of it would ruin the attorney and my honest man." There are also letters signed "G. S." (or perhaps "G. J."—Jennings' wife?), asking Webb whether her husband will be required to attend this term, if Webb will give her "an indifferent place for me to direct to, your house being highly improper" and if he will write under "some fictitious name." With the true whine of a "nark" she adds that she is very ill and "expects the extremity"; she also warns him against employing another informer Watson * as "a most uncommon good understanding subsists at present between that gentleman and Mr. P——ps" (Philipps). On July 23rd, "Mr. P——ps will receive £1,000 the latter end of next week," she writes, and if Webb does not pay her, P——ps will, and her husband will

* The name is not very clearly written, but I think it is Watson. As government agents were very anxious to trap Wilkes, I venture to compare with this, a letter from M. Watson (Add. Ms. 30880-B, folios 25-26), undated, to Wilkes, asking him to assist in financing a brothel. The writer is very anxious that Wilkes shall visit him or her, and the letter seems to me to have the appearances of a snare.

furthermore be overcome at the thought of the "treachery" into which she has "betrayed him." The part of other spies is less clear: Phebe Gibbs records the fact that she is a mother, and her baby has convulsions, also that "ninety pounds (you know what has been said) would render me the happiest of beings"; but beyond the fact that she was sent out of London lest Wilkes' side should discover her we have little clue to her activities.[39] Perhaps the clearest of all is a letter from Faden to Webb (September 24th) in which he says "there is no other way to . . . complete the business" than by getting a gentleman who can go with him (Faden) "and tender down the money to Michael Curry who I believe will not resist the temptation, he is the principal person that can do everything in the affair, being the manager entirely of Wilkes' business."

"A more serious crime" has been mentioned above; this crime was forgery. It is not possible, at this late date, to discover exactly in what part of the case this forgery occurred or who was the guilty party. To substantiate the charge at all, it is necessary to examine more closely the famous *Essay on Woman.* This, as we possess it to-day, consists of a fragment of ninety-four lines, closely parodying Pope's *Essay on Man;* appended are several short poems such as a parody of the *Veni Creator.* There was much more of the *Essay on Woman* which was never printed and remained in Ms., for Wilkes dispersed the type and abandoned the idea of printing early in June, 1763. That there was this extra matter is shown by a letter from France in January, 1764, which Wilkes wrote to his friend Humphrey Cotes: "As soon as I can get time I will send you more of the *Essay on Woman.* How much have you already?" He had already told him and Philipps where to find copies of the printed sheets.[40] The ninety-four lines in question were printed in red, with a frontis-

piece, an introduction, and a commentary, part of which was supposed to be by Bishop Warburton, Pope's pedantic editor. No copy of the original edition is known to survive; in its absence forgeries have been put out, of which the best known is one ascribed to John Cleland, the author of the *Memoirs of Fanny Hill,* beginning, "Awake, my Sandwich." [41] But the text has been preserved through the anxiety of Lord Sandwich and his colleagues who demanded so many copies "for official use" that the Home Office clerks were exhausted and the poems had to be set up in type and printed off, without the frontispiece and in black.[42] From these the copies at present extant are descended.* The poem begins:

> Awake, my Fanny, leave all meaner things:
> This morn shall prove what Rapture . . . . . brings.
> Let us (since Life can little more supply
> Than just a few . . . . . and then we die)
> Expatiate free o'er that loved Scene of Man. . . .

It is quite unprintable, and what wit it once had has evaporated, now that an exact knowledge of the *Essay on Man* is no part of a gentleman's education. In the notes some (but very little) flavor of wit still lingers. It is addressed to Fanny Murray, once a well-known courtesan.

*Large extracts are also to be found in the crown papers at the Record Office and the Guildhall. The distinction between the true and false *Essays* can be at once established by comparing them with these extracts. The presence or absence of the engraved phallus as a frontispiece is the test of a genuine "first edition" of the *Essay,* one of which the late Mr. H. S. Ashbee claimed to have seen during the last century. There is, I believe, an edition in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and in the British Museum a copy of both the false and the true *Essays* (P.C. 31 f 30 and P.C. 31 k 7). The false has notes by Ashbee from which he concludes that certain of the most violent strictures on Wilkes—as for example, that of Lord Stanhope—were inspired by this tedious poem. I cannot agree with the implied compliment to the genuine poem. It should be added that these works are not issued to the public for general reading.

Twelve copies only were printed by Wilkes, which is the basis for the

Great efforts were made by the government to fix the authorship, as well as the printing, on Wilkes. The brief they prepared says, "The Ms. . . . was all of Mr. Wilkes' handwriting" (though Curry was eventually only asked in whose hand were the *corrections*), and "this work Mr. Wilkes declared to Mr. Curry had taken him a great deal of time and pains to compose." [43] Curry's statements are universally regarded as worthless, and violent controversy has raged over the authorship of the *Essay* ever since Sir Charles Dilke in his *Papers of a Critic* (Vol. II) upset the usual ascription to Wilkes. This ascription rests chiefly upon a phrase of Wilkes himself in his *Letter* to the electors of Aylesbury. He takes in this the strong line that inquisition into what was never published is an outrage; that he has a right privately to write what he chooses: "If I laughed, it was in private that I laughed." [44] In his *Letter* to the Duke of Grafton, which has been cited *mal-à-propos,* Wilkes reminds Pitt bitterly of the compliments he (Pitt) had sent through Potter to him in 1754 on "two certain pieces" which had been read "ninety-nine times" at the dinner-table, but these cannot have been the long *Essay on Woman;* they were no doubt two of the smaller pieces at the end. Heaton Wilkes anxiously urged his brother to omit these sentences, but Wilkes refused, preferring to retain the sneer at Pitt and depend on the argument that inquiry into his private amusements was an impertinence. His letters to the printer [45] in which he inquired after the progress of "my essay" have no importance one way or the other: later in life when he published his *Theophrastus* and his *Catullus,* Wilkes spoke of "my *Characters*" and "my Catullus"; but

conjecture that they were intended, when finished, for the Medmenham monks. Michael Curry secretly worked off a thirteenth copy for himself, which was the one he sold to the government.

he did not mean that he wrote the books. Sir Charles Dilke laid stress on the fact that Curry was not, in the event, asked "in whose hand was the copy" but "in whose hand were the corrections." This also has no importance: Wilkes would probably in any case have "fair copied" the Ms. for the printer.

The ascription of the bulk of the text to Wilkes' dead friend Potter rests upon much more serious, and, in the opinion of the present writer, unassailable grounds. Had the government approached the question of authorship (which it rightly decided was superfluous and dangerous—printing and publishing was enough), Wilkes' answer was to have been this: "It is a circumstance of universal notoriety," says Philipps' brief roundly, "that the Essay on Woman . . . [was written] about fifteen years ago by Mr. Potter, son of the late Archbishop of Canterbury." Captain Edward Thompson, a close friend of Wilkes, certifies to the truth of this in his introduction to Whitehead's *Poems;* Mr. H. W. Bleackley[46] cites a similar authentication proceeding ultimately from Wilkes himself. The pamphlets published at the time in reply to Kidgell's defense of his action say repeatedly "the author is dead" and that "you know it." An inspection of the poem, indeed, discovers what one may call certain glosses or emendations which obviously were made by Wilkes himself at the time of publication,* but the bulk of the poem is clearly written many years before. The reference to Edward Hussey's powers, to his Duchess, and to Peg Woffington were comprehensible fifteen or thirteen years before—they were indeed topical; but in 1763 they were obscure and stale. In the advertisement to the *Essay* there is a sneer at Hogarth's "line of beauty" which must date from 1745; Potter had been caricatured by

* For example, the line, "Godlike erect, BUTE stands the foremost man—"

Hogarth, but Hogarth was Wilkes' friend till 1762. Furthermore, the cleric held up to ridicule was Warburton, Potter's peculiar *bête noire*. They had quarreled; moreover, since Potter had probably seduced Warburton's wife the principle of *odisse quem læseris* encouraged him to further dislike. The poem was dedicated to Fanny Murray: it was probable that Potter would dedicate such a poem to her and not likely that Wilkes would. For Fanny Murray—who died in 1770 after having been respectably married—was in her prime between 1735 and 1745; and Wilkes was at Leyden until 1746, and unlikely to have been connected with her.

These in the main, are Dilke's arguments. But there has been preserved among Wilkes' papers [47] a letter from Potter which seems at once to settle the matter. It was written on July 31, 1755, long before there was any need for any one to claim or disavow the authorship. "Who your Mrs. M. is," it says, "with whom you rather wish me . . . I am at a loss to guess. I could reverse the letter and attempt the *Essay on Woman* without even the hope of having a Commentator. They are a cursed race and often marr the text. Take notice I do not mean to censure your annotations. Thou art no marr-text. But you often supply a text when without your assistance it would be defective." From this it appears clear that Potter wrote the text of the *Essay* and Wilkes composed some or all of the commentary.* This corresponds with the impression given by a reading of the book, for the text is flat and probably always was, while the notes show traces of a Wilkite wit. It is also clear, from the reference to Pitt, that Wilkes must have composed two at least of the short poems.

* It should be mentioned, however, that Almon (*Letters*, II, 9) says that the notes were "principally written by Potter." What value is to be attached to this remark is quite uncertain.

This being the provenance of the *Essay,* it is still not certain that the exact text of Potter's essay was produced at the trial. Wilkes was not present at court, as will be shown later, and his lawyer was probably bought by the other side. He never knew precisely what passed at the trial.[48] His knowledge of the portions of the *Essay* which were to be brought forward was derived from a pamphlet written by Kidgell. Kidgell referred, in a vague but recognizable manner, to passages cited in the plea now preserved in the Guildhall.[49] To this pamphlet Wilkes replied (in the *Letter* to Aylesbury) in a manner which at first sight seems ordinary theatrical condemnation:

"The neat, prim, smirking *chaplain* of that babe of grace, that *gude cheeld* of the prudish *Kirk* of *Scotland,* the Earl of March, was highly offended at my having made an 'Essay on Woman.' *His nature* could not forgive me that *ineffable crime,* and *his own conduct* did not afford me the shadow of an apology. In great wrath he drew his grey goose quill against me. The *pious Peer* caught the alarm, and they both poured forth most woeful lamentations, their tender hearts overwhelmed with *grief,* or as the *Chaplain,* who held the pen, said, with *Grief of Griefs.* He proceeded to make very unfair extracts and afterwards to *benote* them in the foulest manner. The most vile blasphemies were forged, and published, as part of a work which in reality contained but a few portraits drawn warm from life, with the too high colouring of a youthful fancy, and two or three descriptions, perhaps too luscious, which though *nature* and *woman* might pardon, a Kidgell and a Mansfield could not fail to condemn."

The word "forged," apparently mere rhetoric, takes on a somewhat different aspect when Kidgell's private letters, of which a few remain,[50] are considered. The letters have neither beginning nor end; only a small portion of the story to which they point can ever be known, but truncated as they are, they are sufficiently astonishing. They are written from Utrecht in the years 1766, 1767, and 1769, and addressed to

the Earl of March. The first letters explain that the writer is ruined; he is married and has dependents, but the earl evades answering his letters. In August, 1766, he explains that he had to withdraw because of his unpopularity over the Wilkes case; an affair which looked like embezzlement and also hastened his flight arose similarly from his zeal on the earl's behalf in that matter. On June 2nd, 1767, General Baron van Tuyll writes on his behalf to March, and we hear for the first time a distinct suggestion of a threat: *"S'il venoit de mourir il puiroit laisser des ecrits dictez par son desespoir."* * In a letter of September 18th, Kidgell, left to starve (as was March's callous way), comes out into the open. He had, he says, in the first place been promised protection if he deserted "his old friends" and joined "in the prosecution against Mr. W." So far from this having been done, he had not even been allowed to vindicate himself, for Lord March had objected. He had not approved of the measures taken against Wilkes; *"I therefore made no hesitation to inform you that I had seen a Forgery in Mr. W.'s papers."* Lord March, he reminds him, had expressed detestation of such a thing. Nevertheless Kidgell later saw *"that same forgery (two months after this discovery) made instrumental to Mr. Wilkes' condemnation."* He had believed at the time that by putting the facts before Lord March he had served the cause of justice as well as if he had informed Wilkes himself. "Now I humbly submit it to your Lordship to consider whose Honour I consulted by that precipitate retreat out of the kingdom, which ruined my reputation and saved your Lordship's. The thing is fact." He makes it quite clear that the purpose of his flight was to avoid a reëxamination of the whole question,

* "If he were to die he might leave writings dictated by his despair."

in which March would have been shown as covering up the faked document. March seems to have answered this letter by, at best, a further evasion, for on the 6th of October, Kidgell writes again: "I am surprised that the same action which fills me with horror and remorse, can be looked on by your Lordship with indifference. . . . I am determined to lay the whole affair before my Lord Chief Justice, who I take it for granted will either rehear the case or take such methods to satisfie the injured party as shall be consistent with strict justice and public tranquillity." He has not, he observes, been in communication with Wilkes, though "the intelligence which I could have given him was above all price"; he ends by accusing himself of "shameful and submissive silence."

Kidgell was a poor man, and a dependent, guilty of two acts at least that put him within reach of the law. March was a cruel and dishonest man with all the power of wealth and political influence. If he had been frightened he would revenge himself without mercy. We do not know what his action was, we can only guess it from Kidgell's last preserved letter (May 6th, 1768): "My lord, permit me to throw myself at your Feet to ask your Pardon, for the liberty which I have taken in making Intercession for the most contemptible of men . . . I cannot lose the opportunity . . . of entreating your pardon."

What the forgery was is a problem that must be left unsolved. There are a few indications; it must be, for example, sufficiently important to be "instrumental" in Wilkes' condemnation. It may therefore lie somewhere in the cited portions of the *Essay* or else in the *North Briton,* Number 45. But the text of the latter was too well known, and too easy to establish, for a forgery to be possible there: moreover, Kidgell had nothing to do with that side of the case. With some

hesitation, it may be suggested that it is probable that the forgery occurs in certain of the more objectionable passages of the *Essay on Woman*. If this be so, we should expect to find that at the trial considerable effort is made to conceal from Wilkes the exact text of the incriminating passages.

V

Outlawry

THIS time the attack on Wilkes had been prepared with meticulous care. No such humiliating defeats as those which had ended the previous onslaught were to occur on November 15th, the day on which Parliament would meet. Further, by the mere presence of an attack, Wilkes was immediately put at a great disadvantage. His adroitness as a political strategist lay wholly in attack, never in defense. Once he had been forced to retreat, he very easily got "rattled"; he was not indeed frightened, for his courage has never been seriously doubted, but his moves were hesitating and indecisive. As soon as he was on the offensive again there was practically no limit to the damage which he could inflict. On this occasion he seems to have imagined that he would be allowed to raise forthwith his question of "privilege" of the House of Commons and open the battle on the ground he had chosen; when he found that this was not so, and that a double, if not a triple, attack was to be delivered on ground chosen by the enemy, he was sharply taken aback.

Immediately after the swearing in of new members, Wilkes jumped confidently to his feet in the new Parliament. At the same time, George Grenville, by private arrangement with the speaker, Sir John Cust, arose and announced that he had a message to deliver from the king, which must take

precedence.[1] Custom gave precedence to questions of privilege, and on that subject Wilkes, by an appeal to self-interest, had some hopes of shaking the ministerial majority. For that reason the government had decided to break through precedent, and insisted that the royal message should be taken first. On a question such as that the pensioned majority could not afford to forget its allegiance, and despite Pitt's protests, it was carried by 300 votes to 111 that the royal message be heard first. The message was, of course, to announce that John Wilkes had avoided trial for libel by pleading privilege of the House, and asking the House to take the matter into consideration. The mechanical majority worked smoothly on this day; thanks were formally given for the message and Lord North, for the government, moved a motion declaring that "Number 45" was a "false, scandalous and seditious libel; containing expressions of the most unexampled insolence and contumely towards his majesty, the grossest aspersions upon both Houses of Parliament, and the most audacious defiance of the authority of the whole legislature; and most manifestly tending to alienate the affections of the people from his majesty, to withdraw them from their obedience to the laws of the realm, and to excite them to traitorous insurrections against his majesty's government." The terms of this resolution, excessive though they were, served the purpose of reminding the Court supporters of their duty; he would be a brave placeman who voted against it. Wilkes, it is true, was allowed to make his complaint of the invasion of privilege to which he had been subjected, but the government maneuvers had deprived his speech of any dramatic qualities; it fell flat and the House proceeded to vote the government resolutions by 237 to 111, adding an instruction that the

paper be publicly burned.* General Conway—Walpole's friend and the holder of a government post—ventured to vote against the motion: the very next day the king wrote to George Grenville demanding, and securing, his dismissal.[2]

Badly as things had gone for Wilkes in the lower House, even worse had been happening behind his back in the upper. Since the name "Warburton" was appended to certain of the notes of the *Essay,* and since the Bishop of Gloucester was a member of the House of Lords, it had been decided to denounce Wilkes as having libeled a member of that House. Sandwich, whose great day had come, arose and read the *Essay* and its notes aloud, stopping from time to time for ejaculations and comments in which he expressed his horror that such things could be written. His own morals, his habitual language, and his acquaintance with Wilkes were too well known for his piety to be accepted. Dashwood (now in the Lords as Lord le Despenser) commented audibly that it was the first time he had heard Satan preaching against sin, and Lord Lyttelton, disgusted by Sandwich's relish at the obscenities he was reading, demanded that the recitation should cease. But his voice was drowned in cries of "Go on" and as soon as Sandwich ceased, his place was taken by the Bishop of Gloucester. Warburton was beside himself with rage; he said, "the hardiest inhabitants of hell" could not listen to such blasphemies, and he "called his God to witness" that he did not "write any one of these notes."[3] Temple, who was completely taken aback by this sudden attack, attempted as best he could to defend Wilkes by complaining

* When Harley, the High Sheriff and an M.P., attempted to carry out the burning of the *North Briton* before the Royal Exchange, he was overwhelmed by the crowd, which rescued the *North Briton* and burnt a large jackboot (John Bute) instead. The House of Commons thanked Harley for his zeal; the City of London vexed the court exceedingly by declaring that there was no occasion for it to do the same.

of the methods used by the government, but he was swept aside and a resolution passed declaring the *Essay* "a most scandalous, obscene, and impious libel." The House would have added a statement that Wilkes was the author of the poem if Lord Mansfield had not pointed out that Wilkes ought, in that case, first to be heard in his own defense.

This double attack had put Wilkes in a far worse position within one day. The question of privilege was forgotten, overlaid by more exciting matter. The trial for the *North Briton* and for the *Essay* would go on, not before Pratt, but before Wilkes' enemy Lord Mansfield, in the Court of King's Bench; and the publications were in advance condemned by a vote of both Houses. But a third blow was to come, though it was probably not so much part of the government campaign as the result of the zeal of a subordinate. During the debate in the House of Commons, Samuel Martin, M.P., who had many months before been exposed in violent terms in the *North Briton,* arose and delivered a set attack on "the author" of the paper. Measured insults came from his lips, evidently prepared beforehand with the intention of making a duel inevitable. The unforgivable words, "a cowardly rascal, a villain and a scoundrel," he repeated twice. Next morning he received, as he expected, a note from Wilkes telling him that "you was not so much in the dark as you affected" and avowing authorship of the paper. Martin immediately replied as follows:

November 16, 1763.

Sir:

As I said in the House of Commons yesterday that the writer of the North Briton, who had stabbed me in the dark, was a cowardly as well as a malignant and infamous scoundrel, and your letter of this morning's date acknowledges that every passage of the North Briton in which I have been named, or even alluded to, was written by your-

self, I must take the liberty to repeat, that you are a malignant and infamous scoundrel, and that I desire to give you an opportunity of shewing me whether this epithet of *cowardly* was rightly applied or not.

I desire that you meet me in Hyde-park immediately with a brace of pistols each, to determine our difference.

I shall go to the ring in Hyde-park, with my pistols so concealed that nobody may see them, and I will wait in expectation of you one hour. As I shall call in my way at your house to deliver this letter, I propose to go from thence directly to the ring in Hyde-park, from whence we may proceed if it be necessary to any more private place, and I mention that I shall wait an hour, in order to give you the full time to meet me.

I am, Sir, your humble servant,

SAM MARTIN.

Wilkes with his second, Humphrey Cotes, followed at once to Hyde Park. They walked together a short distance to avoid a group who seemed to be coming towards them. Wilkes and Martin then paced fourteen yards apart and both fired. Their first shots missed—the morning was misty. At their second shot Wilkes also missed but Martin's struck Wilkes in the groin, inflicting a deep and dangerous wound. Wilkes fell to the ground in great pain. Martin ran up to see the effect of his shot; Wilkes, who believed himself dying, urged him to escape at once. Martin started off, but returned again to ask if he could not be of assistance; being told he could not and being urged again to save himself from the possibility of legal punishment, he took himself off. Wilkes, suffering greatly and already feverish, was carried home, where he instructed his servants to find Martin's letter and return it to him, so that in the event of his death no evidence would remain of Martin's guilt. He refused to speak of the matter and informed his surgeon merely that it was "an affair of honour" until the latter was able to assure him that, with care, his life was safe.[4]

Wilkes himself was wholly satisfied with Martin's behavior; there was a foundation of confidence and simplicity in the character of the man who had already the reputation of a cynic. Because a corrupt and singularly dishonest politician had exchanged shots with him, he became at once for Wilkes a gentleman whose honor was above suspicion. "My antagonist behaved very well. We are both perfectly satisfied with each other," he wrote to his daughter Polly. In all their later correspondence or contact Wilkes observed carefully the dignified courtesy, touched with respect, which he felt due to an honorable adversary—Martin himself doing his best to play up to this standard of chivalrous politeness. But Wilkes' friends, and even his enemies, took a different view of the affair. They noted that Martin had restrained his apparently uncontrollable anger for months before he suddenly forced Wilkes to a duel. They commented adversely on the trick in his letter by which Martin deprived Wilkes of his undoubted privilege, the choice of weapons. Finally, it was discovered that Martin, to make his aim certain, had been practicing all the summer at a target. "I shall not," wrote Horace Walpole, "be thought to have used too hard an expression when I called this a plot against the life of Wilkes." [5] Many years later, some suspicion of the truth seems to have reached Wilkes, for opposing in Parliament in April, 1777, the grant of the additional civil list he remarked, "Under the head of *Secret and special service* I find that between October, 1762, and October, 1763, a *most memorable year,* there was issued to Samuel Martin Esq. £41,000."

While Wilkes was helpless on his back he received news of an attack which he deeply resented. On October 23rd the

House of Commons again debated Wilkes' case. The government moved a declaration that the privilege of members did not cover cases of seditious libel. That it carried its motion was to be expected; but what Wilkes did not expect was that Pitt, while nominally defending him, should deliver an insulting attack. Wilkes "did not deserve to be ranked among the human species—he was the blasphemer of his god and libeller of his king," said Pitt, and twice repeated the statement that "he had no connexion with any such writer." This was hypocrisy from the man who had laughed with Potter over Wilkes' parodies, who had given Wilkes political advice from his bedside, and who had not only welcomed him warmly in 1757 into public life, but, on October 16th, 1759, was on terms of sufficient intimacy with him to end a letter with these words: "Be assured that I shall always be extremely glad to promote your desires—(always meaning your virtuous ones)—and believe me with great truth and regard, dear Sir, your humble obedient servant." [6] It has been suggested [7] that Pitt's attack was a maneuver to get back to office by negotiation with Bute. Such an assumption is not necessary. Wilkes was, for the moment at least, clearly of the losing side, and inopportune loyalty to broken subordinates or allies was never one of Pitt's virtues. The man was down and that was enough reason for kicking him. Pitt probably did not know, he certainly did not care, that this revelation of his character had deeply shocked and hurt one of his warmest admirers and left Wilkes with the belief that every one of his friends in his time of trial had deserted him, except Temple and Charles Churchill.

As Wilkes began to recover from his wound, his spirits rose again. He was cheered by the news of Wood being

fined £1,000 on December 6th, and by the loud delight of the London crowd.*

Sir Charles Pratt's words in deciding the case became famous: "This warrant is unconstitutional, illegal, and absolutely void: it is a general warrant, directed to four messengers to take up any persons, without naming or describing them with any certainty, and to bring them, together with their papers. If it be good, a secretary of state can delegate and depute any one of the messengers, or any, even from the lowest of the people, to take examinations, to commit or release, and, in fine, to do every act which the highest judicial officers the law knows can do or order. There is no authority in our law books that mentions these kinds of warrants but in express terms condemns them. . . . If . . . higher jurisdictions should declare my opinion erroneous, I submit as will become me, and kiss the rod; but I must say, I shall always consider it as a rod of iron for the chastisement of the people of Great Britain."

The House of Commons stung Wilkes to more vigor by a deliberate insult. They professed to believe that he was malingering, and ordered Dr. Hebberden and Mr. Hawkins to go to Great George Street and inspect the invalid. Wilkes answered with considerable spirit that "the house had desired them [the doctors] to visit him, but had forgotten to desire him to receive them, which he most certainly should not." [8] To Hebberden and Hawkins he sent a polite note regretting that he was unable to receive them at the moment but inviting them to dine with him and take a "piece of mutton" as soon as he was well.[9] On reflection he added a

*On the same night a Scotch lieutenant, Alexander Dun, attempted to break into his house, and returned on the 8th. He had announced his intention of murdering Wilkes; investigation proved him to be clearly a lunatic. The incident has no importance, though it naturally created great excitement.

further rudeness and called in Doctors Duncan and Middleton, saying that as they were both Scotsmen and also attached to the royal household, they must surely be accepted as suitable spies. It may have been at this time that he made a jest which became a catchword of the Whigs. Invited by a lady to take a hand at cards, he answered, "Dear Madam, do not ask me: I am so ignorant that I cannot tell a king from a knave." "I love my king so well," he said again, "that I never hope to see another." But jests were not sufficient weapons with which to fight the government. Wilkes felt badly his need of full health and courage for the struggle. He wished—if he was to go to prison for a long while—to say good-by to his daughter, who was in France, and unwell. In short, he determined to take a holiday in Paris, and left privately on December 24th, 1763, evading the watch the government kept on his house, and doing his health considerable harm by the jolting of the journey. In leaving England he had no intention of flying from his prosecution; he had, indeed, no further objects than those already mentioned. No plan of campaign was in his head, nor when the crisis came, did he do anything but procrastinate, in the hope that something would turn up.

His absence from London had one great disadvantage, for the conduct of his case fell out of his hands, and no one was left with sufficient authority to replace him. Philipps, his solicitor and natural representative, professed himself greatly indignant at Wilkes' journey; moreover, suspicions of his honesty had already arisen. Temple was a good friend and a source of funds, but the Lord of Stowe could not be expected to abandon his political business to direct the affairs of a vagabond client. Charles Churchill, even had he been a suitable man to direct a lawsuit, was well advised to keep

himself quiet and not attract official attention. In the event, most of the responsibility fell on another of Temple's circle, Humphrey Cotes, a wine merchant. Cotes was an honest man with the reputation for business ability. He was a loyal friend and a generous man, but he was unmethodical and easy to deceive. He is remembered best perhaps by two anecdotes—one a second-rate pun of Wilkes who, "going to visit a girl kept by the famous Humphrey Cotes, said *fungar vice cotis*";* the other a pleasant practical joke of his own. He bet the rather touchy Charles Churchill a bottle of wine that he would write two better lines than Churchill had ever written, and that Churchill would admit it. He won his bet, for the two lines were: "Pay to Charles Churchill or order, £50: Humphrey Cotes." He cared for Wilkes' interests no more effectually than he did for his own.

Parliament was to meet on January 16th, 1764, and Wilkes arranged to return to London on the 13th. Fortunately, perhaps, his reckless way of living in Paris took its revenge: he was seized with illness and prevented from starting. He sent an account of his health to the Speaker, and accompanied it with a certificate signed by two French surgeons. The Speaker, Sir John Cust, answered him very courteously and without a hint of doubt. "I am very sorry, sir," he said, "for the account which you give of your health."[10] But Cust was a Court man, and when he read Wilkes' certificate to the House, contemptuously remarked that it was not signed by a notary, nor otherwise certified. As soon as this objection was reported to Wilkes he provided certification by two notaries and by the English ambassador.[11] But it was then too late; the majority had received its instructions, the Whigs had made their usual protest and Wilkes had been expelled from

* "I take the place of Cotes"—there is a pun in the Latin. Add. Ms. 30888.

the House of Commons by an overwhelming majority on January 20th.* The reason alleged was, of course, the publication of the *North Briton,* Number 45, despite the iniquity of not merely condemning a man in his absence, but of prejudging a case which was still to come before the courts. A month later (February 15th) the Whigs made a further effort to check the victory of royal autocracy. Sir George Savile, the popular and independent Yorkshire M.P., and Sir William Meredith introduced a declaratory motion condemning general warrants. On this matter the Whigs had the law on their side, since the decision of Lord Chief Justice Pratt; and it looked at one time as though they might have the House of Commons on their side also. To retain the royal hold on the House the government was obliged to call from their beds elderly invalids and gouty old gentlemen who never expected to be disturbed. "The floor of the House looked like the pool of Bethesda," said Horace Walpole; and even with these precautions the government only secured a majority of fourteen for the rejection of the motion, after a debate of unusual length and violence. In it little occurred of note, except the declaration of Attorney General Fletcher Norton, exact in law but intemperate in form—"If I was a judge I should pay no more regard to this resolution than to that of a drunken porter"—and the speech of Charles Townshend, a rising member of the opposition, in which he followed Pitt's lead in defending passionately Whig principles and covering Wilkes with contempt and abuse.

Only a week after this debate (February 21st) Wilkes' case came on before Lord Mansfield. The proceedings, in his

* A letter to Cotes of January 20th shows that by that time Wilkes was fairly recovered, but was carefully assuming in Paris the pose of an invalid, in order to gain time. Of course Parliament could know nothing of this. (Add. Ms. 30868.)

absence, were brief and formal: his representatives denied the publication and admitted the printing of the *Essay;* the *North Briton* they neither could nor would deny. Lord Mansfield entered judgment against Wilkes, but passed no sentence, merely issuing a writ for his arrest. Externally, the trial passed through smoothly and decorously, but almost at once Wilkes' defenders began to suspect and to proclaim that this outward regularity concealed some gross irregularity. Their suspicions naturally were turned to Mansfield. Judges at that date made little attempt to conceal their political prejudices, and were attacked as openly by the partisans of either side. P. C. Webb, as a government servant, wrote and published throughout 1764 a paper called the *Moderator,* which contained scurrilous attacks on Pratt.[12] Wilkes' party could not be expected to refrain from attacking a Scotch judge who was believed to have drunk success to the Pretender on his knees.[13] They ascribed to him the many-fathered maxim "the greater the truth, the greater the libel";[14] Churchill wrote of "pale Mansfield":

> Paleness not such as on his wings
> The messenger of sickness brings,
> But such as takes its coward rise
> From conscious baseness, conscious vice.[15]

Irregularities of every kind were permitted in eighteenth-century trials; at this very trial Lucas, Philipps' clerk, distributed to the jury copies of the report of the trial of J. P. Zenger,* and counter-pamphlets were circulated by the government side.[16] The behavior of judges, without the check of the press and public, was almost inconceivably improper; an undated

* Guildhall Ms., Vol. III. J. P. Zenger was a New York printer unsuccessfully prosecuted by the government for a seditious libel in 1735. See L. Rutherford, *J. P. Zenger,* and R. W. Postgate, *Murder, Piracy and Treason.*

letter of Charles Churchill's about the "trial of the conspirators relative to Miss Fanny" may be instanced.[17] He tells Wilkes that the judge declined to have the woman brought into court, and "applying his hand to that part of the body where fools say they are better provided than men of sense" said, "I find I shall certainly be at her." Courts which permitted such license were not likely to deny themselves other more convenient liberties. Wilkes' faction charged Mansfield with one such irregularity. The day before the trial the counsel for the Crown applied to him for permission to alter the word "purport" in the indictment to the word "tenor"; he granted it. This was without question "altering the record" as the Wilkites claimed, and they also claimed that it seriously injured Wilkes' prospects in the case. "If the word PURPORT," says the appendix to Wilkes' *Letter to George Grenville,*[18] "had remained, upon which Mr. Wilkes' counsel were prepared to argue, scarcely any two men would have been found who would have agreed in a verdict finding him guilty to the PURPORT or effect charged in the information, but by the alteration to the word TENOR the PURPORT was not in question and the defense was changed into a critical comparison of the words, letters and figures in the papers published with those in the information filed, for which no time was allowed." The brief for Wilkes' counsel adds to this "the *tenor* . . . imports the very words themselves, for the tenor of the thing is the transcript."[19] This reasoning is not very cogent; still, one may wonder what was the intention of the Crown in pressing for a change apparently so trivial. More perhaps could have been made of a strange incident which indicates a possible attempt to pack the jury. A number of legal Middlesex jurymen were put off from attending the court by the receipt of a notice which after-

wards fell into the hands of the Wilkites. It was signed "summoning officer" and contained a false notice of adjournment.[20] But of all the obscure events at this time nothing is less explained than the behavior of Wilkes' solicitor, Alexander Philipps. He, who was Wilkes' most natural, if not only, source of information, wholly refused to give him any information about the proceedings with regard to the *Essay on Woman,* coolly referring him to "oral tradition" which as Wilkes reasonably complained, was only another phrase for "chit-chat." [21] He alone of Wilkes' friends tried to bring him back to England, even going so far as to taunt him with cowardice.[22]

It has already been noted that he or his clerk privately handed an important paper to Halifax's agent and that the journeymen printers considered he had betrayed them. But what precisely were the proofs of his dishonesty will probably never now be known. On March 6th Cotes wrote to Wilkes laying out at length his reasons for suspecting Philipps. The letter is preserved,[23] but, as is the case with all Cotes' correspondence, some liquid has been poured over half the page and the writing is nearly obliterated. Half sentences remain from which we can deduce his thesis, but the proofs that he offered are lost. We have only the letter of Wilkes on the 15th, acknowledging Cotes' alarming charges, and a further letter of April 4th, in which, on reflection, Wilkes writes, "I agree with you he is a compleat scoundrel." Finally, on May 4th, Wilkes wrote to Cotes enclosing copies of his correspondence with Philipps, suggesting that the lawyer had been bribed to entice him over to England.[24] Soon after he adopted Cotes' advice and broke off relations with Philipps.[25]

All this was not known, but enough was suspected to make it generally believed that the condemnation of Wilkes had

been forced through by trickery and violence. The Parliamentary opposition of the Whigs had failed and the London working class—"the mob" in contemporary phraseology—was without the power to make effective its anger. All that it could do was vent its rage on the instruments of oppression. As Kidgell left the court he was covered with blows and abuse, and the populace (he wrote) *"crioient au delateur au Delateur comme on crie communément au Voleur."* * The patron of his living, Sir Kendrick Clayton, to show that he shared this indignation, prosecuted him for the universal crime of non-residence, and though Clayton was unable to carry the case through, Kidgell was made so uncomfortable that he fled to Utrecht, taking with him the funds of the Godstone turnpike.[26] Faden, in dunning the government vainly for his money (£56. 10s. and £27. 17s.)—for the government, characteristically, "bilked" its agents—begged for additional grants, owing to his loss of business and unpopularity. Hassall, another printer, presenting a claim for £9. 18s., left a blank space for "——Loss of Reputation, friends, and the Uneasiness it has produced in my mind ever since."[27] The fate of Michael Curry, Wilkes' treacherous foreman, was more grim. In March of the next year he wrote to Webb begging for employment as "the general disapprobation my conduct met with among the Trade in regard to the affair of Mr. Wilkes occasioned the Masters to form a Resolution never to employ me again," and in June he laments that the Masters' "contempt instead of diminishing increases."[28] But in the next month P. C. Webb was superseded as Solicitor of the Treasury, without warning or explanation,[29] and with him disappeared Curry's last friend. Curry fled to Norwich and then to Bristol, but "not a printer nor a printer's devil would

* "Cried *Informer, informer* as one generally cries thief."

associate with him," and in Bristol he committed suicide.[30] Williams, the printer of Number 45, was brought to trial in August, 1764, and the jury, it is true, convicted him; they were overpowered by the Lord Chief Justice's insistence that it was he, not they, who was judge of what was a libel, and by the use made of Pitt's and Townshend's speeches by Bute's agent on the jury, who said "the Minority [in Parliament] had left Mr. Wilkes." [31] But when, next February, Williams stood in the pillory, the populace received him with deference, formed a guard of honor, hung jackboots on the pillory and made a collection of £200 for him.[32] The chief mover in the prosecution of Wilkes, after the king, was out of the popular reach. London had done all it could against the Earl of Sandwich immediately after the attack had opened. Gay's *Beggar's Opera* was playing at the time at Covent Garden, and when Macheath, the imprisoned highwayman, spoke the line, "But that Jemmy Twitcher should peach I own surprises me," a vast burst of cheering underlined the point.[33] Sandwich received the nickname of Jemmy Twitcher—not that he cared—and ever afterwards it was used, sometimes even in his presence.

It was certain, however strong was the feeling of London merchants and working class, that they would not be able to defend Wilkes against his enemies. If he intended to return to England, he had through his unlucky illness missed the most opportune moment. He had not been present in the House of Commons to answer the motion for his expulsion; he had not appeared in court to defy Lord Mansfield at the trial. If he entered London now there would be no Parliamentary debate and no dramatic scenes in court; he would be quietly arrested, hustled before Mansfield for sentence, and then vanish into his prison. On the other hand, to remain in

France would suggest timidity and injure his reputation. He had debated this question earnestly for some time past in his letters to England. As early as the 20th of January he had discussed with Cotes the danger of returning to stand trial, and the probability that afterwards he would again have to flee to France,[34] "for no man in his senses would stand Mansfield's sentence upon the publisher of a paper condemned by both Houses of Parliament as scandalous, seditious, etc." He professed himself prepared to come to terms with the government, "but the king can never be brought to this." His most serious reflections run: "I will now go on to the public cause, that of every man—liberty. Is there then any one point behind to be tried? I think not. The two important decisions in the Court of Common Pleas and at Guildhall have secured for ever an Englishman's liberty and property. They have grown out of my firmness and the affair of the *North Briton;* but neither in this case are we nor our posterity concerned whether John Wilkes or John a Nokes wrote or published the *North Briton* or the *Essay on Woman.* The public then has no call on me. I have steadily pursued their object; and I may now after all their huzzas fall back into the mass of common citizens. Does any one point suffer by my absence? I have not heard that it does. . . . I believe that both parties rejoice at my being here." He realized that the decision which he proposed to take was serious. "No man," he repeated,[35] "can stand Mansfield's sentence against the author of a libel. . . . I think myself an exile for life." He believed indeed that Mansfield had determined to sentence him to life imprisonment, with the pillory in addition.[36] He therefore made his plans for a life exile. But in the autumn he suddenly changed his mind. Lord Halifax had been playing for time to avoid answering Wilkes' prosecution for violence and rob-

bery under the general warrant. It now became clear that he was waiting for Mansfield to pronounce outlawry against Wilkes, whereupon the case would fall to the ground. Wilkes therefore abruptly changed his mind, decided it was his duty to return, and announced his decision in a letter of September 17th. Subject to Temple's approval, and Cotes', he would go north to prevent "the great cause against Lord Halifax" failing.[37] It was decided that Cotes and Churchill should meet him next month at Boulogne to discuss the matter before he actually set foot in England. Meanwhile, he prepared a lengthy and able *Letter to the Electors of Aylesbury,* which recounted the whole story and was well calculated to revive a waning enthusiasm. It was published on October 22nd.

It is probable either that Wilkes' resolution had weakened, or that Cotes and Temple had made effective opposition, for Wilkes' visitors did not reach Boulogne till October 24th—a dangerous delay if Wilkes seriously intended to return. Moreover, they spent some days in merry-making, while Wilkes outlined a fantastic plan for saving money by taking a journey to Italy. On the 29th their attention was sharply distracted by a sudden illness of Churchill. He had been drinking heavily—unlike Wilkes, he habitually drank to excess—and it was thought that his malady might be only the effects of a carouse. It was not: it was typhus and he had no strength to resist it. He rapidly became worse and on November 4th was dead. The last line of verse that Churchill had written was,

I on my journey all alone proceed;

his last spoken words were a request to his "dear friend, John Wilkes" to act as his literary executor.

Wilkes was shattered by the blow. He left Cotes to take the body to England and himself hastened back to Paris in a

state bordering on dementia. He found no rest nor consolation; the deathbed of his friend was continually in his mind. "I am better," he wrote a fortnight later to Cotes, "but cannot get any continued sleep; the idea of Churchill is ever before my eyes." His letters are full of references to Churchill and he plunged himself anxiously, for a short while, into the task of editing his poems. In December of the next year he was congratulating himself on the progress he had achieved. "How pleased is the dear shadow of our friend with all I have done! I am sure of it." [38] (It is characteristic of Wilkes that at his death the edition was not one-quarter finished.) Thirty years later he erected in his garden "a *Doric Pillar* with the inscription:

CAROLO CHURCHILL
DIVINO POETÆ
AMICO IUCUNDO
CIVI OPTIME DE PATRIA MERITO,*

. . . about nine feet high and five feet diameter" and surrounded by the conventional eighteenth-century yews, cypresses and laurels, myrtles, bays and laburnums. Time, though it never filled Churchill's place in Wilkes' heart, took the edge off his sorrow. "He was long," he wrote of himself, "in the deepest melancholy. On his return to Paris he passed the day and night alone in tears and agonies of despair. At last the three great remedies mentioned by Cicero came to his aid, *necessitas ipsa, dies longa, et satietas doloris*.† . . . A variety of company by degrees engaged his attention and his grief at length mellowed." [39] These consolations did not aid Church-

* To Charles Churchill,
A divine poet, A delightful friend,
And a citizen who deserved well of his country.

† "Necessity itself, the passing of time, and sufficiency of sorrow."

ill's other great friend, Robert Lloyd, who was living, a debtor in the Fleet, on his bounty. He pushed his dinner aside when the news was brought him. "I shall not long survive poor Charles." He died in December.

Meanwhile the full process of law had been completed against Wilkes. On November 1st sentence of outlawry was formally passed against him for failing to appear at the Court of King's Bench. And "this," said the *Annual Register,* "completed the ruin of that unfortunate gentleman."

VI

Life in Exile

"QUAND *on n'a pas de chemise,*" said Madame Geoffrin to Wilkes, *"il ne faut pas avoir de fierté." "Au contraire,"* he answered, *"il faut en avoir afin d'avoir quelquechose."* * Wilkes in Paris in 1765 had every need of his personal pride. The whole efforts of his party had been strained against the persecution to which he had been subjected; they had ended in entire defeat. Wilkes was an outlaw, he was an exile, he was in financial difficulties, he must have suspected or feared that his withdrawal to France had injured his reputation; finally, there appeared no reason whatever to expect any political change which would assist him. The king had chosen the person of Wilkes as the *corpus* on which to prove that his power was now supreme and could not be checked either by justice or expediency; the demonstration seemed to the victim and to every one else to be entirely successful. Wilkes' outlawry and his expensive habits had also naturally embarrassed his fortunes. Cotes and Heaton Wilkes sold up his estates for him, which friends purchased at a handsome price: Temple drew his pen through the record of the sums which Wilkes owed to him; but at the end of it all the exile could hope for no more than £500 a year—though of course there was the lump sum of £1,000 from Under-Secretary Wood, which he began to spend in anticipation in Paris.

* "When one has no shirt, one should not have pride"—"On the contrary, one should, in order to have something." H. Bleackley, *John Wilkes*, p. 157.

He wrote on the first of November, 1764, to Temple,[1] promising to observe a temperate mode of life, to send his adored daughter Polly back to England to her uncle Heaton, and himself to leave Paris and take a journey to Italy, by which he was convinced he would save money. Nor were his protestations mere pretense. He started upon the writing of a *History of England,* for which he drew a fee in advance, and completed the Introduction. (It was an unsatisfactory performance, and he never wrote any more.) At the beginning of December he sent Polly across the water to stay with her uncle. It was a very sensible decision, both for his finances and her future, but at the moment it seemed only to be a fresh source of griefs. Mrs. Wilkes, by legal action, forced a half-share in the care of Polly to be allowed to herself—the thing Wilkes most feared—and Heaton, who was thrifty and respectable, treated Polly as a spoiled, wasteful, Frenchified minx of fourteen, which quite possibly she was. He sent her private French maid back to France at once, and when the girl said that she could not possibly dress herself without the aid of the maid, he indicated that with or without the aid of a slipper she had better learn to do so. He also offered some derogatory remarks about her father. "By God, Heaton is a barbarian!" cried Wilkes, when he learnt what had happened.[2]

Polly soon accommodated herself to her uncle, who was really a simple and kindly man; Wilkes on the Continent tried to escape from his solitude and discouragement by a life of dissipation. Among his numerous *amours* had been one with a mercenary but exceedingly beautiful Italian dancer named Gertrude Corradini. She was a woman of the conventional tempestuous character, and in his association with her he was largely occupied with soothing violent attacks of nerves. She

was attended by the conventional mother who supervised with great delicacy the sale of her charms; she yielded to Wilkes only after the conventional resistance and with a thin pretense of financial disinterestedness.[3] But Wilkes fell violently in love with her and was attached to her for months by a passion whose recollection was strong in his heart thirty years later, and guided his pen in a warm picture of her charms: "She was a perfect Grecian figure, cast in the mould of the Florentine Venus, excepting that she was rather fuller and had flatter breasts. Her whole form was the most perfect symmetry. Extremely delicate in her person she continued constantly attentive to every circumstance which could give herself, or a lover, pleasure. She possessed the divine gift of lewdness but nature had not given her strength adequate to the force of her desires." She was weak in health, her *crises de nerfs* left her exhausted, "in conversation she was childish and weak," but in the affairs of love, Wilkes indicated, she was unusually ingenious.

Wilkes went south to Italy indeed (December 25th), but it was in the company of Corradini, and his journey was an expensive pilgrimage of love which left ardent memories. He recalls how with naïve piety she would veil, at Bologna, the portrait of the Virgin Mary above her bed. "This was the more amusing because there were no curtains either to the bed or to the windows; a circumstance in so temperate a climate most agreeable to Mr. Wilkes because every sense was feasted in the most exquisite degree, and the visual ray held sometimes in contemplation the two noblest objects of creation, the glory of the rising sun and the perfect form of naked beauty." All political cares and hopes were forgotten while he was at Corradini's feet. "So sweet a situation, and so beautiful a woman, engrossed the mind of a man naturally too

susceptible of pleasure, and though his faculties were not enervated, yet his schemes of ambition and public life were as much neglected as his own private concerns:

. . . dum Galatea tenebat
*nec spes libertatis erat nec cura peculi.**

He even took care to let his friends in London know that his attachment was almost official. On May 21st, 1765, he wrote to Humphrey Cotes, "I am now quite alone, for Mlle. Corradini and her mother are gone from Naples: though the world has as little to do with my amusements as with our friends." [4] Otherwise his communications with England were almost confined to affectionate domestic letters to Polly; even to her he made a discreet but significant reference to Corradini. In Naples, while in Corradini's company, he renewed his acquaintance with James Boswell, the author of *An Account of Corsica* and of the sentence "better occasional murders than frequent adulteries," which Wilkes regarded as the most unreasonable aphorism he had ever read.[5]

Wilkes' return to politics was not the result of any initiative of his own, but of the faithlessness of Corradini, who in the summer of 1765 decided that her lover's financial resources were by now probably running out, took advantage of his temporary absence, cleared the house of all valuables and decamped. Though she repented almost at once, Wilkes had sufficient sense to refuse to have anything more to do with her, and set out on a leisurely return to France. He received on his way civilities from every man of standing and enlightenment, and on his return to Paris found the welcome and unexpected news that the government had fallen and the head

* "While Galatea held [me] there was no hope of liberty or care of wealth."

of the official Whigs, Lord Rockingham, had been summoned to form a ministry (July, 1765). He did not know the reason of this, which was, in truth, merely that George III was unable to bear any longer the arrogance and unamiable personality of George Grenville and had failed to secure Pitt as his successor, but he hoped for the best, and ascribed to Rockingham's ministry a strength which it did not possess. He was, at least, certain that his sufferings would now be repaid amply by the gratitude of his friends. He had, indeed, not only by eighteenth-century standards but surely by any standards of loyalty, the right to expect that the party for which he had done so much would secure him justice and recompense. If he had any doubts, they were speedily removed by the enthusiastic letters he received from the wire-pullers who acted on behalf of the Rockingham ministry. George Onslow, M.P., undoubtedly with the ministry's support, wrote to him immediately on taking office, "I now begin my correspondence with you, at my first entering into office, with and under an administration whose principles I hope and believe will authorize your giving equal support to in their very different situation. . . . Believe me, my dear John, your mentioning me as you do gratifies my pride. . . . Our good friend Humphrey [Cotes] and I are at this moment at your service, and from us both you shall soon hear." [6] William Fitzherbert, an M.P. whom Lady Vane described as "dry and shy and sly," [7] and Lauchlin Maclane, M.P., closely attached to Lord Shelburne,[8] also got into touch with him and offers were even sent through Heaton Wilkes. "Heaton asks me several questions," he wrote to Cotes on August 18th, "I know not by what authority and on what foundation. If I am to give my opinion, Constantinople [i.e. the ambassadorship there] is by far the most preferable. Perhaps he is only amusing

himself and me." [9] There were indeed too many offers and too many negotiators; incompatible promises and contradictory suggestions abounded, but nothing tangible resulted. Wilkes was almost in poverty, for Cotes sent him none of the £1,000, and he was perplexed and annoyed. He wrote to George Onslow on December 4th, *via* Maclane,[10] "I ought at the entrance into power of the present gentlemen to have had a pardon under the Great Seal without my asking it. . . . I hop'd this from your kind letter to me at Paris." He explained that he would be prepared to take the governorship of Jamaica, with Maclane as Lieutenant Governor; he added a postscript saying that Maclane now advised rather the Leeward islands, to which he also would agree. He was becoming exasperated, and had begun to suspect that the Whigs were not prepared to face the displeasure of George III and were merely playing with him to keep him quiet. "I begin to think that I am doomed to an eternal exile, or that I must force my way home," he wrote.[11] The final blow was the receipt from Fitzherbert of a concrete offer "in the name of some of the ministry." It informed him that the sum of £1,000 had been placed to his credit in Paris and that it would be annually renewed out of the income of their respective places. Wilkes was stung by the meanness and timidity of this; he expected rehabilitation and was offered hush money. The offer was, he told Fitzherbert, "equally precarious, eleemosynary and clandestine; I claim from the present Ministers a full pardon under the Great Seal for having successfully served my country. . . . If this is denied me, I shall not look upon these Ministers as my friends and *provoco ad populum* like an old Roman." * He repeated the same remarks to Onslow; to

* "I appeal to the people"; December 8th. See Treloar, p. 46. The rest of the letter refers to another unknown offer, which he regarded as even more ignoble.

Cotes he wrote more temperately that "the idea of an annual sum of £1,000 being paid to me does not captivate my imagination. . . . You avoid, my dear friend, the use of the word *pension* with great care; yet I believe the world would rather consider such a grant only in that light, though I should myself look upon it as paying very poorly all the costs of suit due to me." The presence of the £1,000 in Paris was a great temptation to him. The Reverend John Horne, a recent and scandalous acquaintance, warned him to beware of it: "by furnishing you with the means of pleasure they intend to consign you over to Dissipation," he remarked.[12] Wilkes was driven by severer needs than those of dissipation: he was in deplorable difficulties. He wrote with frantic earnestness on New Year's day 1766 to Cotes, asking for some, at least, of Wood's thousand pounds. "I have not received, my dear Cotes, one single shilling the whole year 1765; surely you can manage something for me, and directly."[13] At last, yielding to overwhelming difficulties, he decided to draw upon the £1,000, not as a pension, but as a single subscription to cover some of his heavy losses sustained in the Whig cause. It was, after all, merely anticipating the £1,000 he would shortly receive from Wood: furthermore, he would cut through this vexatious criss-cross of negotiations by going over to London himself, risking arrest, and explaining the position personally to his friends in the ministry. This he did, crossing on May 12th, 1766, and being gratified at once by an invitation to see the government representative, Edmund Burke. His interviews with Burke are not recorded. There were five in all, and they provided a progressive series of disillusionments.[14] Wilkes seems at first to have demanded with some confidence a pardon and compensation for his financial ruin; he was answered by the repetition of the old government offer of a secret pension,

to be paid to him in exile, and no pardon nor hope of pardon. Burke was willing enough to "see the prime minister" and convey Wilkes' reproaches, to amuse Wilkes with speculations, and to encourage him with alternative plans. But he brought back nothing but the same unacceptable offer, and meanwhile it was pointed out to Wilkes that as an outlaw he was in grave danger. Any man could arrest him, and while of course the government would regret if such a thing should happen, it would be unthinkable that it should interfere with the course of justice, &c., &c. It was made clear to Wilkes—possibly in so many words—that he could either go back empty-handed or stay and be arrested; the government had thrown him over. He returned to France on May 31st.

At scarcely any other period in his career can Wilkes' hopes have been at a lower ebb. He had no hopes now except in the event of Lord Temple himself being summoned to form a ministry. And even Temple had begun to forget an assistant who could be of no more use to him. He no longer answered Wilkes' letters on political matters * and in the *History of the Late Minority,* a publication issued with Temple's aid and supposed to present the opposition case, Wilkes' history and person were very badly treated. "Everything is offered up to the shrine of Stowe," Wilkes wrote to Cotes in vexation on July 6th.[15] "I will not, however, be a passive victim." But no sooner had he settled down in Paris than another political change revived his hopes. Rockingham's ministry fell and Pitt formed what is known as the Chatham ministry. It was true that Temple was not a member of the ministry. He had been invited by Pitt, and had demanded

* "I have on several occasions," wrote Wilkes later (Nov. 16, 1767, see *Grenville Correspondence,* Vol. IV), "desired to have the advice of my most respectable friend, who would have been my polar star. I was, however, left in the dark, and then if I do miss my way I am told I go astray."

that he should be treated as an equal, with a half-share and equal say in policy and patronage.[16] Pitt wholly refused and the brothers-in-law quarreled. Pitt retired to the Lords as Lord Chatham, and before long illness caused him to leave the direction of affairs to the Duke of Grafton, who was from the very beginning the chief power in the government.

Grafton had visited Wilkes in the Tower in 1763; he seemed publicly committed to his support. Moreover, Wilkes received from the duke's brother what he regarded (possibly mistakenly) as a direct invitation from the duke to visit London. Mercurially, he became as optimistic as he had been depressed. He wrote in high exhilaration to Cotes telling him that he was forthwith to be given a free pardon,[17] and bounced across to England again on October 28th. Immediately on his arrival in London he addressed a formal application to the Duke of Grafton, in cordial and confident tones. It contained personal compliments to the duke, as to a friend, mentioned that Wilkes had kept himself severely aloof from the large Jacobite colony in Paris and concluded with the hope that he would now be allowed to stay in London.[18] He then sat down to wait for an answer. Grafton did indeed show Wilkes' letter to the king, who thrust it aside, and this feeble-willed debauchee was the last man to risk a struggle with the king's obstinacy. He thought after a while of a crafty device; he sent a curt message in the third person instructing Wilkes to apply to Lord Chatham (Pitt). This ingenious move completely defeated Wilkes. Pitt had betrayed and personally insulted him, and to apply to him for relief would be a great personal humiliation. Pitt had recently quarreled violently and publicly with Wilkes' only consistent supporter, Temple; to attach himself to Pitt's retinue would be gross ingratitude. Nor, with such a man as Grafton, can we rule out the calcu-

lation that, if he did so, Wilkes would lose his last protector and could be safely offered up as a victim to the king. Wilkes did not hesitate: he left the same day for Paris. From there he addressed what is commonly considered his best political pamphlet, *A Letter to the Duke of Grafton,* the most biting portion of which was its denunciation of the character and policy of Pitt.

This was the second *Letter* and second political manifesto that he had addressed to England from France. But like his personal visits, they were mere raids from abroad which injured his enemies and often embarrassed his friends, but brought him no immediate aid. He was perplexed as to his next moves; and his perplexity was increased at the beginning of 1767 by a new catastrophe. The secret of the non-arrival of the anxiously awaited remittances was suddenly revealed; Humphrey Cotes went bankrupt. In all, he had sent Wilkes twenty guineas; all the rest disappeared in his bankruptcy. Wood's £1,000 now vanished beyond any recall; Wilkes lost £1,300 in all. Cotes' books indeed showed a debt of no more than £487, but he had failed to keep his accounts or send any statement to Wilkes.[19] Wilkes never had any doubt of his friend's honesty. Cotes had in fact failed him not through ill intention but through asininity; but this was of no assistance to Wilkes. In May of 1767, when the full extent of the disaster was known, Wilkes' creditors in Paris naturally became alarmed, and pestered him for their money. Before long Paris was as uncomfortable for him as London: he visited The Hague, Leyden and, even for a day, London. He was revolving in his mind a desperate act. As early as October, 1767, he inserted in the *St James' Chronicle* an announcement that Mr. Wilkes would defy the outlawry and return in time for the forthcoming general election and offer

himself as a candidate. The insertion was intended as a test of public opinion (as also was his flying visit to London, where he consulted his friends). It produced one very curious piece of advice, from a correspondent named John Warner Phipps, who urged him in the most anxious phrasing not to stand for the City or any other popular seat but to secure one of Lord Temple's pocket boroughs.[20] It is interesting to observe that an exceedingly acute writer, Sir William Rough (who afterwards married Wilkes' bastard daughter) considered that if Wilkes had followed this advice, the tempestuous events of the next two years would never have followed.[21] A corrupt borough, such as Sarum, he observes, was a property; and the House of Commons, cavalier as was its behavior with a democratic constituency like Middlesex, would have abstained in a case in which "the ideas of property and possession would have been more strikingly intrinsic." The Commons might have been vexed at Temple's abuse of his property if he sent them Wilkes as an M.P.; they never would have dreamed of expropriating him.

However this may be, Wilkes was not tempted by the suggestion, which fitted in neither with his needs nor with the political opinions which he had gradually been forming. A popular constituency and a resounding campaign were necessary for him. He decided to aim as high as he could, and announced himself as candidate for the City of London. He left the Continent and arrived in London, this time for good and all, in the first days of February, 1768.

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It is convenient, at this point, to examine some of the reasons which are offered for the common belief that Wilkes was corrupt, insincere, and in the words of Lord Brougham, "al-

ways in the market"; especially as some of the accusations are connected with the period of his exile. In judging such charges, the political manners of the eighteenth century must be borne in mind. The word "enthusiasm" was a word of abuse. Except on the electoral platform, where rhetoric was expected, nothing was in worse taste than for a gentleman to make emotional professions of high motive. Partly no doubt because of the rise of the Nonconformist movement, but even more because of the change in social conditions, many to-day are accustomed to require the private or semi-private conversations of radical leaders to correspond to and echo their public ideals. They expect, and often receive, the spectacle of a life lived on an ostentatiously, or at least admittedly, high moral level. Nothing could be more distasteful to Wilkes personally or to the general fashion of the eighteenth century. Individuals might disregard this ban. Pitt did so: but Pitt was married to a Grenville and was for years the greatest power in the state. But though it was forced to listen, the House of Commons muttered at his bad taste and his theatricality. Burke, in private and in his set orations, struck a high moral note, but when he rose in the House the members fled. Wilkes was not married to a Grenville, he was never the autocrat of England, and he had not Burke's solemn earnestness. Moreover, he was not a great gentleman to whom eccentricities were permitted. In the City of London, later, he was an aristocrat to the aldermen and common councilors, but outside he was the son of a distiller who was careful not to make the least slip in etiquette. Nor, had he been tempted in his conversation to defend his sincerity, would his nature or habits of mind have permitted it. He was a wit, not a preacher, and to his reputation as a wit he clung most anxiously. "Garrick and Wilkes," said Mrs. Thrale years later,

"are the two oldest men of their ages that I know, for they have both worn themselves out by being on the rack eternally to give entertainment to others." To give this entertainment, he swung to the other extreme, and ascribed to himself invariably the worst possible motives. Whatever might be the result, he had more *savoir faire* than to parade disinterestedness and idealism; he never did a good thing without giving a bad reason. When Edward Gibbon at the beginning of his career pestered him to outline his motives, he promptly replied that all he did, he did "to make his fortune." [22] He no doubt enjoyed the goldfish surprise on the historian's plump face, and did not care if the story went the round of the town, to end up in our histories as a serious judgment. Much of the mud with which he has been covered, he in this way deliberately poured on his own head. His efforts have been seconded not only by the lazy habits of anecdotists who have attributed to Wilkes every cynical jest whose father they did not know, but also by two persistent and able detractors, Horace Walpole and Lord Brougham and Vaux. Lord Brougham, whose character has been well outlined by Lord Campbell in his *Lives of the Lord Chancellors,* devoted to Wilkes in his *Historical Sketches of the Time of George III* a section in which his intemperance and mendacity were under even less control than usual. Statements made by Brougham concerning facts coming under his personal knowledge, or even dealing with his own life and ancestry, are not to be relied upon, much less anecdotes which he collected or invented concerning a man of whom he was making a set and forensic denunciation. Perhaps the most famous of Brougham's stories is one concerning Wilkes and Henry Luttrell. Wilkes is said to have stood with his antagonist on the hustings and pointed to the crowd of Wilkites below and re-

marked, "I wonder whether there are more fools or knaves there." "I will tell them what you say," said Luttrell, "and put an end to you." "It is you that would be put an end to," answered Wilkes, "for I should tell them that you lied, and they would destroy you in a twinkling of an eye." That this story is false has been proved by Mr. P. Fitzgerald,* but it has at least this truth, that it is a thing Wilkes was capable of saying. Every public man must at times have his doubts, and be disillusioned with his followers: Wilkes would cast these doubts into the form which would most enhance his reputation for cynicism. At the end of his life, when he was conversing with the king, George III, not without malice, asked him about his recently dead friend, Serjeant Glynn. "Ah, your Majesty," replied Wilkes, "he was a Wilkite, which I never was." Since this remark has been taken as evidence of dishonesty, we may compare it with the exclamation of a politician whose sincerity has never been doubted. It is said that on reading the report of a certain Socialist conference Karl Marx cried out, "Thank God!"—"For what?"—"Thank God I am not a Marxist."

Horace Walpole, later Lord Orford, was a very dangerous enemy for any man to make who cared for his reputation after his death. Under a smooth face Walpole hid reserves of malice; he consigned his innuendoes to a secret history which was not to be published till many years after his death, when answer was impossible. Even those who despise him as a man cannot but admit some affection for him as a writer, and his charm and ingenuity have diminished the reputation of others than Wilkes. He met the patriot in Paris, and disliked him. He considered his conversation had "no wit, only the grossest

* Luttrell and Wilkes were not on the hustings together. *Life of Wilkes*, II, 51.

bawdy."[23] (He found Sterne also a bore; he was hard to please.) But Wilkes' true offense was not his language, but that he had spoken disrespectfully of Horace's father, Sir Robert Walpole, calling him a great corrupter. Walpole, whose filial affection was unbounded, classed politicians by the opinions they held of his father, and Wilkes was damned. He recorded the most trivial stories which, unlike his usual practice, are without date or name. Wilkes, he says, had "debauched a maiden of family by an informal promise of marriage." But Wilkes' amours have been catalogued and inspected, and among them all there is not one that corresponds to this indication. Nor is it that Wilkes destroyed the evidence, for he seems to have expected that his *bonnes fortunes* would have excited the admiration and envy rather than the reprobation of posterity. Another of Walpole's anecdotes represents him as saying that he only moved a certain motion "to please the fellows who followed him." Another, more serious, attempt is the story[24] according to which Wilkes was a French spy. The allegation, unlike others equally unsupported, has found few to believe it, nor has any of Wilkes' biographers troubled to refute it, except Sir William Rough:[25] "The story is told in a wandering publication upon the authority of Lord Orford. A somebody is asserted to have been assured by somebody that he had seen in a book, which he supposed to be the pension list of a minister of France, the name of Wilkes. His lordship thence infers that Wilkes came over to England as the agent of the French, to embarrass the English administration. A more idle tale, as it appears to me, has not often been narrated. From 1763 to 1771, the most active part of the life of Wilkes, France was at peace with England. Those events which his election and expulsion produced, surely could in common sense have scarcely been foreseen by foreigners

&c., &c." Sir William in addition points to the continued poverty of Wilkes and his anti-French attitude in foreign policy, if it is thought necessary to consider the charge at all.

Is it to be held up against him that, at the end of his life, he told the Speaker of the House of Commons he had to present a petition from "a set of the greatest scoundrels on earth" and that a few minutes later he rose from his seat saying, "Sir, I hold in my hand a petition from a most intelligent, independent, and enlightened body of men. . . ."?[26] More important is an anecdote of his early career, authenticated by Richard Rigby, the placeman and political "boss" who acted for the Duke of Bedford. He states that Wilkes indicated that he would be willing to accept the governor-generalship of Canada; Rigby replied that Churchill and Lloyd would then remain as thorns in the side of the Bute-Bedford government; Wilkes replied that Churchill could be appointed his chaplain and Lloyd his secretary. The last remark has a Wilkish ring, and it is by no means impossible that at an early stage Wilkes was prepared to abandon his opposition. The truest thing that was ever said of him was said by himself—that "accident made him a patriot." When he entered political life as a gentlemanly career, he did so with a head almost totally empty of political ideas. He attached himself without thought to the two men (Pitt and Temple) who seemed the greatest figures in politics; his first political publication, the *Observations* of 1762, was the merest echo of their views. At that time his nearest and, as he believed, his real friends were men like Sandwich and Dashwood, who might at any time join the government and quite probably if luck had so chosen might have taken Wilkes with them. The accident of the success of the *North Briton,* the accident of his high-spirited zeal for the sport of the conflict, the accident that at this time George III

began a determined attempt to restore the power of the crown —all of these developed his political outlook and hurried him along to the crash of the general warrants and the arrest for "Number 45." From that time a series of unavoidable if unexpected events had forced him to change. He had been ruined and exiled. He had known precisely what royal tyranny could be, and had been compelled to form his own ideas upon the classes of society which would be loyal to a friend of liberty and those which would betray him. He would indeed have been a stupid man if in 1768, as he embarked for London, his head had held no other political ideas than it did five and a half years before when he first published the *North Briton.*

He has been reproached for his negotiations from Paris, but surely without reason. When Rockingham took office, Wilkes had every reason to believe him, not indeed his personal friend, but his party chief who would by the necessary stroke of the pen reward him for his sufferings. Wilkes was certainly unwise to take the £1,000 whose undesirable implications he had denounced, but, as has already been shown, his circumstances gave him much excuse for self-deception. It has next been argued that he ought not to have appealed to a ministry which contained his humiliator Pitt. But how could a sane politician refuse to reply to the Duke of Grafton, when that Secretary of State's own brother, Colonel Fitzroy, waited on him in Paris, and stated that he was authorized by the duke to say he was Mr. Wilkes' "sincere friend" and "was extremely desirous" to do him justice, but that there were certain difficulties which could not be communicated through the post? [27]

Brougham, in saying that Wilkes "always pandered to the appetites of the mob," claimed that he formed the extraordinary ambition of overturning the whole fabric of society

and securing profit for himself from the general chaos. Such an accusation bears its prejudice marked upon its forehead, but it has been answered beforehand. "In the tumultuous overthrow of an established government, spoil and place may indeed tempt cupidity and ambition. But is it probable Wilkes ever promised himself this? Were public affairs, when he commenced his race, in such a posture as to justify even in a madman, so mad a hope? To do him justice, did he himself encourage aught that distantly could lead to throw power into the hands of the many by the abolition of law?" [28] The author of these remarks, Sir William Rough, was closely in touch with Wilkes, and in his *memoir* is exceedingly frank. Although any definite conclusion upon Wilkes' sincerity can be reached only by recounting and considering his political life as a whole, it is nevertheless interesting to notice the words in which Rough sums up his father-in-law's character. He writes, "The track of Mr. Wilkes was over precipices and through wilds: difficulty vanquished is his fame. His measures were his own measures, not the measures of a party; his struggles were his own struggles; his triumphs his own triumphs. . . . His motives were, I believe, public motives; I know nothing that should make me think otherwise. He might be wrong, but, I am persuaded, he was sincere." [29]

VII

Wilkes' Return

MORRIS, in his *Earthly Paradise,* tells his reader to

> Forget six counties overhung with smoke,
> Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,
> Forget the spreading of the hideous town;
> Think rather of the packhorse on the down,
> And dream of London small and white and clean.

Small London was indeed in 1768, but far from clean. A visitor of to-day would regard it as unbearably foul. Almost certainly if we were able to enter eighteenth-century London our first and most abiding impression would be that of an intolerable and revolting stench. No Italian town, with its excrement and rubbish drying in unceasing sun, can produce so nauseating a smell as must have arisen from Wilkes' London. Not merely the absence of sanitation, but the absence of sanitary habits made the accumulation of indescribably filthy garbage both within and without doors unavoidable; and it has been plausibly observed that the ladies and gentlemen of that century used perfumes so extensively because the smell of their persons would otherwise have been unendurable. The streets were unlit and unpaved, jets of black mud were shot up by cartwheels or careless passersby onto the clothes of any gentleman unwise enough to walk instead of ride in a sedan chair. Armed assault and robbery were far from infrequent (it was not so long, after all, since Jonathan Wild had met his death) and very little protection was to

be expected from watchmen or Bow Street runners. The population crowding the narrow and dark streets was ready to insult and torment for mere amusement strangers, or those whose appearance seemed in any way odd. "Shocking abuse and ill-language" greeted M. Grosley, a French visitor who asked his way in London in 1765. Another foreigner,[1] commenting on "this custom of abusing strangers without the least provocation," remarks, "when I first went to London, I remember that a stranger could scarcely walk about with his hair in a bag without being affronted. Every porter and every streetwalker would give a pull to his bag merely to rejoice theirselves and the passengers." Fielding, in 1752, after singling out the watermen as the most violent of the London working class, added of them all that they insisted on an exclusive right "to those parts of the street that are set apart for foot passengers. In asserting this privilege they are extremely rigorous; insomuch that none of the other orders can walk through the streets by day without being insulted, nor by night without being knocked down." [2] Cruelty to apprentices and children, as well as to animals, was indubitably commoner and less observed than to-day, though no very serious indictment could be maintained against Londoners on this ground. Those interested in morality could observe the almost universal habit of drunkenness at least one day (or night) in the week, and the crowds of thieves, pickpockets and streetwomen. They could purchase the intimate physical descriptions of the amours of Lord Grosvenor or Colonel Francis Charteris, widely spread under the form of reports of the court known as Doctors' Commons, or otherwise; or study the full and optimistic advertisement of the charms and prowess of the Covent Garden ladies published in *Harris's Guide*. "All other publications are chastity compared to

this!!!" cried the announcements of a paper which unashamedly took the name of the *Rambler;* and the choruses and words of the songs universally sung in the streets gave equally sure evidence of the universal grossness.*

Yet the observer who concluded that before him was a brutal and degenerate society would have been absurdly mistaken. A prosperous population whose civilization was rapidly on the upgrade would have been a truer description. Even the second writer quoted above adds to his complaint, "in the space of ten years I have observed that the English have considerably mended their manner in this particular . . . now both strangers and natives wear bags about London without molestation." In reading of dirt and disease, chaos in administration, absence of hospitals, deadly epidemics, stupration, riot and murder, we are astonished at the record; whereas what should call our attention is not the existence of these disorders (which had always been), but the fact that now first they were noticed, described, condemned, and eventually abated. Complaint and analysis are the prelude to reform.

* These songs are unfortunately impossible of quotation. They formed a large body of genuine folksong, some described as having "very pretty" or "very catchy" tunes. They were driven out of existence at the end of the century by deliberate action, which arose in a rather curious manner. A Society was founded by one Reeves for the purpose of preventing the dissemination of the works of Tom Paine, and persecuting any unfortunate bookseller found selling any radical literature. When in the course of time the radical movement was shattered or driven underground, the Society turned its attention to harassing, in general, all those of whom its respectable supporters disapproved, and descended upon costers and all others found singing these songs. Under the threat of imprisonment and suspicion of disloyalty, the London proletariat was forced to abandon *The Tumbling of Irish Molly* for *Britons, Strike Home* and other patriotic ballads which the Society provided. Francis Place, who tells the story in his guardbooks, spent part of the evening of his life in writing down what he could remember of the popular songs; but, precise and painstaking though he was, his recollection was fading, and he frequently had to halt in his writing and lament his inability to recall the exact words of some particular obscenity.

It is, moreover, generally accepted that the first half of the eighteenth century was a period of growing prosperity and increasing civilization. Smollett's picture of the English peasant of 1765 as "well fed, well lodged, well cloathed, tall and stout, and hale and jolly" is well known. Up till about 1756, when bad harvests and the oppressions of war caused a sharp rise in prices, England had enjoyed one of those few periods of class stability and relative comfort (such as was the best age of Greece) in which alone much progress in civilization is recorded. Trade had been freed from the oppression of the dying guilds, but machinery had not yet come to the aid of capitalism to enable it to overturn and destroy the whole social fabric and especially the livelihood of the poor. A beginning had been made in the reform of methods of agriculture, but enclosures had not yet ruined the peasants and driven them off the land to starve. London specially had shared in these benefits. It was the residence of the nobility, who were consciously promoting the arts and especially a greater refinement in living. It was less industrial, already, than some of the rest of the country, and the effects of the long war had been for it on the whole beneficial. War meant for the Londoner more employment. Government offices expanded, contractors received orders for which they needed more hands, public bodies needed more clerks and officials. London was already a cosmopolitan market, and depended upon foreign trade even for its food. In 1774, the dispute over the price of bread led to an investigation of the sources of supply, and it was discovered that between January 4th and May 27th no fewer than 130,362 quarters of foreign wheat were imported by London.[3] Much poverty no doubt existed still. The Spitalfields silk weavers, who may have formed the greatest single group of "tradesmen" (as skilled

operatives were commonly called), were very irregularly employed, owing to surplus Irish immigrant labor. Indeed, among the Irish some extreme poverty was to be found; they were chiefly builders' laborers, sedan chairmen, or weavers. The chief other categories of immigrants appear to have been "Ashkenazim" Jews, amongst whom there was no doubt much filth and misery, and negroes or Lascars, the two last named being chiefly servants or sailors and not excessively poor. But for the native operative life was easier. It has been calculated [4] that a working mason, for example, could live a life so comfortable as to be almost well-to-do. It was true that if he fell on hard times, the poor law and the workhouse offered the prospect of little but acute suffering; still, that had always been so. The average mechanic had in compensation several advantages. His work was not standardized, he still had pleasure in it, and the possibility of craftsmanship. In many trades the medieval system of the progress from apprentice to journeyman and journeyman to master might still be observed in daily occurrence. Such was the case in well-established trades like tallow-chandling, weaving, wax-chandling, fellmongering and tanning. It was less well established in less skilled trades such as those of the calenderers, porters, or colormen. In other trades it was in visible decline, and foremen directed workmen who were not journeymen and had never been apprentices. These trades were those in which capital had been largely invested, and a provisional list is not of negligible length: brewers, distillers, vinegar-makers, tobacconists, snuff-makers, soap-boilers and sugar-refiners. But although the old City Company method of organization was clearly in process of disintegration, it was by no means destroyed. Prophetic observers might claim that it would shortly be annihilated by economic forces, others that it

merely required some renovation to enable it to continue indefinitely; meanwhile, it undoubtedly existed. In 1775, for example, the Ms. records of the City show inquiries into complaints received from the Fellowship of Carmen, the Deputy Oyster Meters, and the Ticket Porters Freemen. Each of these City organizations is officered and manned, as the documents show, by the operatives actually engaged in the trade, and duly controlled by a governor and under guild rules of conduct. They appealed for, and apparently received, the City Corporation's protection in enforcing their monopoly. The Ticket Porters Freemen who appealed were operatives who were too poor to bear the cost of prosecutions to secure their rights. It is this fact that is responsible for the record of their action, otherwise (we may infer) they could have protected their rights by automatic legal action.

In the hands of such men lay, in part at least, the government of the City. In the same year the exclusive power of the Leathersellers' Company over that trade was reaffirmed and reinforced.[5] Thirty years before Wilkes landed, in 1738, the Cordwainers Company had, with but partial success it is true, endeavored to drive out of business all the master shoemakers not on its lists of membership; the 12th of George I restored similarly to the Company of Tilers and Brickmakers the power to search for and fine for bad bricks. Protected by their charter, and by their independent judiciary of two aldermen sitting daily in rotation at the Guildhall, the Londoners formed a wealthy and powerful center of resistance to the court.

There are, of course, some qualifications to be made to this statement. Certain great enterprises were wholly outside the circle of the City companies. The two most famous are the Bank of England and the East India Company. Merchants

already not uncommonly declined to pay the fees to take up the freedom of their company, preferring to risk illegality without restrictions, or even to move westward out of the companies' jurisdiction. Archenholtz, writing about 1780, noted "within the space of twenty years truly a migration" from the City to the West.[6] For London, just as it has to-day, had spilt itself far out beyond the limits of what was officially and administratively London. To make up the true economic and geographic London of the eighteenth century we must add to the City the borough of Southwark, the city of Westminster, and the voting majority of the county of Middlesex. Fortunately, these had all franchise systems as democratic, if not more democratic, than that of the City. The Southwark freemen were fairly numerous; Middlesex had a freeholder franchise, while Westminster was most democratic of all with its "scot-and-lot" charter. Under this everybody who paid certain small municipal dues had the right to vote. This enfranchised even unskilled workers, but so inflated the electorate that it required the organizing skill of Francis Place, half a century later, to make it a certain radical seat. Meanwhile, the gradual emigration of wealthier merchants meant that the government of the City of London fell more and more under the influence of the smaller shopkeepers and working freemen; and its politics were correspondingly democratic. Certain of the wealthiest merchants were coquetting with the court; the generality of rich men were attached either to Lord Chatham, or to Lord Shelburne or whatever lord seemed to be the old idol's heir and representative. But the mass of the voters were essentially democratic and London enjoyed an unequaled prestige. It was after all the greatest and most powerful city of the world. Berlin was an unimportant and recent provincial town, Rome was in decay, Paris was en-

slaved, Madrid and St. Petersburg had never been free, New York was a village. Wilkes shot high and presented himself as candidate for one of London's two seats.

He had but little time. The poll would open on March 16th, the usual Whig and Court candidates had been selected, and he was an interloper. So much indeed, that he was actually not qualified to stand. Good friends there were in plenty to remove the disqualification: he was quickly admitted a freeman of the Joiners' Company and from then forward in all his city contests appeared as "John Wilkes, joiner." Wild popular enthusiasm had greeted him, and still accompanied him whenever he showed himself. This was his only support, for Temple, while not formally estranged from him, neither saw him nor advised him.* He relied upon it not only to return him triumphantly to Parliament, but to protect him against action by the government, which could at any time arrest him as an outlaw. He made indeed a formal attempt to placate his chief enemy. On March 4th his footman delivered at Buckingham Palace a letter from him addressed to the king and couched in respectful and loyal terms, asking for a pardon and permission to resume his life in England. It remained, of course, without an answer. It did him no good at court, where it was regarded as a fresh insult that he should dare to approach the king, but to the populace of London it was a proof of his reasonableness; that it was ignored was another evidence of the malevolence and pride of his enemies. He was chiefly endeared to the Londoners by his sporting courage in facing the limitless dangers of a returned outlaw; these dangers can have been none the less to his mind because the government proved in fact unable to make up its mind

* His letter of February 2nd to Temple (*Grenville Correspondence,* vol. IV) appears to have received no answer.

to act. The *Annual Register* explained its hesitation delicately but accurately: "Many in administration were exceedingly averse from taking any step relative to this gentleman; as many inconveniences had been formerly experienced from such a conduct; and more were expected from a revival of it." [7] Grafton was still the chief of the government and action of any kind was repugnant to his mind. Fletcher Norton alone demanded to know why Wilkes was not already in prison: the rest of the government, despite the king's annoyance, were anxious only to leave Wilkes alone. They were assured that he could not carry the City: they calculated that after such a failure it would be easier to deal with him: perhaps, indeed, he might make so poor a showing that the problem need not be raised at all. In any case, why should they hasten to ruin their personal popularity and endure innumerable vexations to gratify the personal rancor of George III? [8]

The course of the election, meanwhile, to judge by outward signs, seemed to be all in Wilkes' favor. When the poll was opened on March 16th, there was an instant rush of Wilkite electors. But the poll did not close till March 23rd, and during that week a change began to appear. This was partly due, without doubt, to Wilkes' late arrival on the scene. Most of the radical-minded livery men had already promised their votes to William Beckford and Barlow Trecothick, the two patriotic candidates. (Such was the title claimed by the popular party and not refused them by their opponents.) The more prudent and politically minded among them were inclined to blame Wilkes for thrusting himself forward, and, as we should say, "splitting the progressive vote" and giving the victory to the Court candidates, ex-Sheriff Thomas Harley (who had once tried to burn Number 45) and Sir Robert Lad-

broke. The drift became more pronounced as the days passed, and the final figures were

The Lord Mayor (Harley)	3,729
Sir Robert Ladbroke	3,678
William Beckford	3,402
Barlow Trecothick	2,957
Sir Richard Glyn	2,823
John Paterson	1,269
John Wilkes	1,247

Wilkes' complete defeat, however, was due also to causes deeper than the mere lateness of his arrival. Class divisions and economic influences which were to become more pronounced as time went on were at least as responsible. The relative poverty of Wilkes' most ardent supporters had already become a jest. It was charged at this election that one of them had turned his coat. "Impossible," replied Wilkes, "none of them has a coat to turn." Small shopkeepers and working freemen might shout loudly for Wilkes, but they had to consider carefully before they openly voted contrary to the wishes of great merchants who supported either the Court or temperate Whiggism. In the opinion of one very acute observer (who may have been Edmund Burke) this was the deciding factor. "The acclamations of joy," said the *Annual Register,* "with which he was received by the populace were inconceivable; nor were the marks of public regard which he received confined solely to the lower order of the people; several merchants and other gentlemen of large property and of considerable interest, openly espoused his cause, and a subscription was immediately opened in the city for the payment of his debts. The success however upon the poll was not equal to what might have been expected from the first sanguine appearance in his favor. The electors were obliged to record

their names; and the consequences of an opposition to great corporate and commercial connexions were too obvious not to be understood." [9]

But if the court expected that Wilkes would be extinguished by this reverse, they were disappointed. Immediately on the declaration of the poll he announced himself as candidate for a constituency where the names of electors and their choice were not recorded for blackmail or petty tyranny—the county of Middlesex, which polled on March 28th. It was true that the sitting Middlesex members "had represented it for several years, were supported by the court and had considerable fortunes and great connexions in it." [10] On the other hand, he had already, in his City campaign, worked over, at least in part, the electorate he had now to face, and he had secured two invaluable allies, his old acquaintance Serjeant Glynn and the Reverend John Horne. Glynn was a distinguished lawyer who had defended him in 1763 in the general warrant case. Prematurely crippled by gout, he was sufficiently active to tour the South of England this year in support of Wilkes; and his mind was acute and orderly. Henceforward Wilkes always had the law on his side, except on the rare occasions when he disregarded Glynn's advice. While Glynn provided the organization and common sense, John Horne, whom he had already met in Paris, offered a kind of ribald, privateering genius which fitted in marvelously with Wilkes' temperament. Horne was a clergyman, in so far as a bishop's hand (which he compared to the miasma of a plague) had waved over him, but he was drunken, dissolute, witty, and audacious. His democratic beliefs, for which he was later to suffer much, he held sincerely, and in a way he was also learned; nearly all, indeed, that remains in print of this curious character is a mountain of mistaken etymological theorizing, perversely entitled *The*

Diversions of Purley. The name by which he is better known, Horne Tooke, he secured later from a benefactor named William Tooke, whose favor he earned by a characteristic device. In 1774, an enclosure bill was brought before the Commons in which Tooke's interests were injured, but the maneuvers of interested parties were racing it through before Tooke's protests could be heard. All ordinary means of delay having failed, Horne took the determination "to write a libel on the speaker"; which he did, taking care that it should be outrageous enough to demand immediate attention. As he expected, the Speaker exploded with rage and business was held up while the offending author was tracked and dragged to the bar of the House. Here Horne turned away wrath by the most abject apologies and confessions of error; meanwhile, the offending bill had been held up sufficiently long for Tooke to present his protest, and to save his estate.[11]

These three, Glynn, Horne, and Wilkes, formed an unusually able triumvirate and one entirely independent of noble patronage. Temple, true to his policy of caution, helped Wilkes by presenting him with a tiny strip of land to make him eligible as a Middlesex freeholder, but carefully refrained from supporting his campaign in any other way. The Wilkite Committee proceeded for the first time to organize a constituency in the modern way. "Register, register, register" was their motto. Either to protect himself or perhaps merely as a further defiance, Wilkes wrote to the Solicitor of the Treasury, promising to present himself at King's Bench on the opening day, when the election would be over,[12] and plunged into a personal canvass. For every elector he had an apt phrase. To one who said that he would rather vote for the Devil than John Wilkes, Wilkes replied, "And if your friend is not standing?" Even the churches were swept in;

several city churches bore the notice: "The prayers of this congregation are earnestly desired for the restoration of liberty, depending on the election of Mr. Wilkes." [13]

The number 45, his symbol number, was chalked all over the city despite the efforts of Alexander Cruden (of Cruden's *Concordance*), who followed the Wilkites about with a sponge, muttering to himself and rubbing out the figures that annoyed his poor crazy head. Wilkes' picture was in every public house and often even hung as a sign. Wilkes himself told the story of how he walked behind an old lady who looked up at one of them and said, "Aye, he swings everywhere but where he ought." Perhaps the highest expression of adoration was overheard by Horace Walpole—"Squints?" said one of his female admirers, "well, if he does it is no more than a man should squint." [14] "It is a very barren season," the same writer complained in June, "for all but cabalists who can compound, divide, multiply number 45 forty-five thousand different ways. . . . The only good thing I have heard in all this controversy was of a man who began his letter thus, 'I take the Wilkes-and-liberty to assure you,' etc." [15] His two opponents in Middlesex were overwhelmed by a wave of enthusiasm. George Cooke, the first, was an unobjectionable, aged, and ailing man. He decided that the wisest thing to do was nothing: Wilkes could occupy only one of the two seats and he, Cooke, could hope for the lead over the remaining candidate, Proctor. But Sir William Proctor, a man of violent temper, did not see his seat disappearing without an effort. If the mass of the city workers were going one way, then that was enough reason for the large settlement of Irish to take the other side. Moreover, the Irish had almost monopolized the profession of sedan chairmen and the chairmen had a well-deserved reputation for violence. Sir William

got into touch with the chairmen: the Wilkites distributed pamphlets urging their supporters to countenance and allow no disturbance on the Middlesex polling day.[16]

Soon after March the 28th had dawned fine, the question of victory or defeat was seen to be settled. The crowds escorting triumphant electors which poured out from London to Brentford provided the answer. "There has not been," commented the astonished *Annual Register*,[17] "so great a depletion of inhabitants from London and Westminster to ten miles distance in one day, since the lifeguardsman's prophecy of the earthquake which was to destroy both those cities in the year 1750."

Order was observed till the result was known:

John Wilkes	1,292
George Cooke	827
Sir W. Proctor	807

John Wilkes and George Cooke elected.

Then pandemonium broke out. Whatever plans Proctor may have had for violence, they were drowned in a wave of popular enthusiasm. For two days the capital was in the hands of the Wilkites; the government forces were helpless. When the government attempted to call in the soldiers they found to their horror that some at least of the regimental drummers "beat their drums for Wilkes." They called on the old City force—the trained bands. Few came out at the call, those that did found that "six thousand weavers had risen in behalf of Wilkes," who were the "principal actors" in putting the regular forces off the streets. Order was only secured by Wilkes' own choice; it was his committee that patrolled the streets.[18] Probably it was this first wild furore which led Franklin to his famous judgment that if the king

had had a bad character and Wilkes a good, George III would have been turned off his throne. The past five years, the slow restoration of royal autocracy, the undignified and unsuccessful resistance of the Whigs had penetrated more deeply than any one believed into the consciousness of the disfranchised and politically uneducated mass. Their unsuspected fury had burst out into a whirlwind; it was John Wilkes' task for some six years more to ride and direct that whirlwind, little though he can have known to what final result.

Not indeed that "the mob" was in a vicious or enraged mood. It used its command over London almost wholly for rejoicing. Every carriage had "Wilkes and Liberty" or "No. 45" forcibly engraved upon it: every house bore the number 45. Each vehicle that passed was forced to show, on its grooms' and coachmen's uniforms, the blue Wilkite colors; its occupant (especially if his or her dress gave reason to suspect a Court supporter) was required to cheer loudly for Wilkes and Liberty. The Austrian Ambassador, the most dignified of the foreign diplomats, was delicately, but without regard for international etiquette, taken from his carriage and the number "45" chalked on the soles of his shoes. The rejoicings spread far beyond the limits of London. "I went last week to Winchester," observed Benjamin Franklin, "and observed that for fifteen miles out of town there was not a door or window shutter next the road unmarked [with "45"]; and this continued here and there quite to Winchester, which is sixty-four miles." [19] Every window in the city had to be illuminated with candles in honor of the victory; if they were not, a shower of stones saw to it there were soon no windows at all; and several obstinate Scotsmen spent two nights in defiant darkness and considerable cold. After two days, both because it had satisfied itself and because of the promptings

of Wilkes' patrolmen, the mob withdrew. The governing class recovered itself, a little surprised to discover that it had received no damage, except the most serious fright that it could recall since Prince Charlie had reached Derby in 1745.

Each action of Wilkes from his landing in February was part of a thought-out plan. His visit to Bath, the center of fashion, which immediately followed, was not the gesture of an idle man seeking a rest. It was a deliberate flaunting of himself in the "exclusive" center of fashion, a method of indicating to his chief enemies that he was the victor, could show himself where he pleased, and would attend when he chose to the writs and outlawry proceedings that awaited him. Society drew itself away from him in a mixture of pride and alarm; a void was always around him as he coolly perambulated the rooms. He showed himself for a few days and then withdrew satisfied. He had permitted himself but one pleasantry and that a silent one. In the Pump room one day a blusterer accosted him with some coarse abuse: Wilkes without answering a word walked up to him and peered closely at his neck, "as if he searched for Jack Ketch's mark." The point was understood by those present; the bully was silenced.[20]

Wilkes returned to London to continue his campaign. He presented himself on April 20th, the first day of the Easter term, as he had promised, at the Court of King's Bench, to surrender as an outlaw. Troops guarded every approach: an anxious and ominous crowd escorted Wilkes as near as it could get to the door. Inside, Lord Mansfield was in an extreme state of nervousness. Torn between his natural desire to sentence Wilkes and his fear of possible consequences, his legalist mind had thought of a device for postponing a decision, not realizing the ridicule with which he might cover

the court and the government. He listened impassively to Wilkes' defense of Number 45 and at the end astonished everybody by announcing that he could take no notice of the matter, as Wilkes was not in fact before the court at all. The Attorney General not having arrested him by a writ of *capias ut legatum,* the court could not perceive him. Wilkes must please go away.[21]

Such was the substance of Mansfield's ruling, and Wilkes was delighted at its absurdity. An individual, in face of great power, has as his best resort ridicule, and Wilkes was to have many opportunities of making the government look foolish. He retired obediently, spent a week in ostentatious amusements and then sent for a sheriff's officer, asking him to be kind enough to arrest him. The officer obliged: Wilkes saw to it that it was his own lawyer who wrote to the Attorney General to inform him that the arrest which he should have made himself had been arranged by the prisoner.[22] He was swiftly brought before the court, entered an appeal against his outlawry and was as swiftly committed to the King's Bench prison in St. George's Fields. Even now a fresh ignominy awaited the government: the prison coach was surrounded by a crowd, the horses taken out and the police officers expelled. The crowd paraded up and down the city, cheering and hallooing, escorting their idol in triumph. Wilkes from time to time made amused and faint protests that he was the king's prisoner and that this was most irregular. Eventually he was allowed to rest at a tavern and late at night slipped away—but in disguise and in a private carriage. He knocked at the prison and at last secured admission.

Some weeks had to elapse before his appeal against his outlawry could be heard, and Wilkes immediately began to make plans to keep the excitement alive. His friends—Horne,

Glynn, Reynolds the solicitor, Arthur Beardmore, Humphrey Cotes and others—were freely admitted to him, and formed a sort of informal council of war. But the government also was determined on action. Even the then officers of the crown could not but be aware that they had been made publicly ridiculous for their feebleness, and like all weak men they believed that violence was the best method of disproving their weakness. The immense crowds which surged nightly round the prison annoyed them; they determined to stop them by force. The guard of soldiers was continually increased; the Secretary for War, a nonentity named Lord Barrington, wrote urging the responsible officers to hesitate at nothing.

An evil inspiration on May 10th caused them to include Scottish soldiers among the guards. The press grew greater than ever and tempers rose. No one knew exactly how a conflict started. A soldier and a patriot quarreled: stones were thrown. It was afterwards asserted that the riot act was read, others denied it, others said that Mr. Graham, the responsible magistrate, endeavored to read it but was struck on the head with a stone. Whatever may be the truth, a full volley rang out, fired point-blank into the mass of the people. The crowd fled in terror, leaving some two dozen wounded on the ground, six of whom would never move again. But the infuriated Scotsmen did not stop at one volley. They chased their fleeing antagonists; three of them picked on one man whom they believed to be a ringleader. He doubled down a side turning; they followed just too late to see him. They burst into an outhouse suspiciously near, where they found working an innocent young farmer, William Allen. At a nod from his officer, one of the soldiers, Private Maclane, deliberately murdered him.

This ghastly action, even more than the wholesale slaugh-

ter which preceded it, horrified and froze public opinion. A coroner's jury returned a verdict of murder against the soldiers—murder *tout court* against Private Maclane, aiding and abetting against his fellow-private Maclaury and his officer Murray.[23] Captain Murray bolted and hid himself;[24] Maclane and Maclaury, mere privates, were actually arrested. To the people of London the "massacre of St. George's Fields" became for a short while as infuriating a memory as the massacre in St. Peter's Fields did fifty years later, but to the government it was only an occasion for rejoicing. "His Majesty," wrote Lord Barrington officially from the War Office, "highly approves of the conduct of both the officers and the men. . . . They shall have every defence and protection that the law can authorize and this office can give."[25] That this public promise was not empty was shown when the case eventually came for trial. It came before the grand jury at Guildford, packed with great landowners and their tenants, to whom the official will had been made entirely clear. They gave the case a perfunctory hearing and forthwith refused a true bill.

The Wilkites prepared to make some effective protest against these proceedings, but Wilkes' own attention was necessarily diverted to his own affairs. The trial of his appeal against his outlawry came up on June the 8th. Nothing in Wilkes' demeanor showed the anxiety which he must have felt. The legal time in which a reversal of his outlawry was possible had passed, and the grounds on which his lawyers were pleading for an annulment were visibly trivial. If it were not annulled, he became a man without rights, without protection, and in law without even existence. His head was, by the medieval law whose penalties were still unabated, a wolf's head—*caput lupinum*—a thing to be killed at sight.

The least consequence of an adverse verdict must be imprisonment for an unlimited time, until the king was pleased to extend a personal pardon and rehabilitation which could only be bought at the price of apostasy and political extinction. Into the full possible consequences one's mind did not peer. But by no word or sign did Wilkes show any fear; he grinned and chuckled, told gross stories and nodded to his friends, and assumed in every way the appearance, at least, of complete confidence.

The arguments on either side were heard impatiently: all eyes were fixed on Lord Mansfield, and at last the famous judge began to give his decision. It was a set oration. Conscious, perhaps too conscious, of his fine figure, his delicate and handsome profile, and his clear and beautiful voice, Mansfield permitted himself to speak at length. His subject was the duty of a judge to attend only to his own conscience and his knowledge of the law in giving judgment, and to neglect any attempts by violence or popular threats to influence his decision. He described in particular his own considered determination to defy and disregard whatever menaces had been proffered. His phrasing was exact and his sentences well balanced; even to-day, in dead print, the speech has eloquence and power. His audience attended to him in absolute silence, at first in admiration and then in increasing surprise at his continued failure to turn to the matter before him. Their surprise was not decreased when, almost without preparation, he announced that Wilkes' outlawry was void and must be canceled. His ground for this decision was even more surprising—there was an error in the writ. "This curious error," noted Horace Walpole, "was that the proceedings were stated as *at the County Court for the County of Middlesex,*" instead

of, as Mansfield said they should have been, *"at the County Court of Middlesex for the County of Middlesex."* [26]

The Wilkites were the first to recover from their astonishment: London and then the chief towns of England became one blaze of illuminations. They explained Mansfield's action very simply: he was afraid. He had been hustled on his way to court, the people were infuriated from the recent massacre, and there was no knowing what might follow a verdict condemning Wilkes finally to outlawry. Nor can their judgment have been wholly wrong. Mansfield's law defies explanation or defense, but his political wisdom is obvious. In the last century two kings had lost their thrones before popular disapproval; only twenty years before, George III's father had nearly lost his to a rabble of tribesmen. No one knew whether or not the fabric of government could stand another shock. A lawyer-politician's duty was to find a way out; it was not Mansfield's fault that the only evasion possible was so lamentably unconvincing.

Whatever his reasons may have been, the effect of Mansfield's act was clear. Everything was put back as it had been in 1764. John Wilkes must now appear to receive sentence for Number 45 and the *Essay on Woman.* Other things which had been dropped might also be revived—as, for example, the action against Lord Halifax for damages, consequent upon the use of the famous general warrant. Wilkes forthwith started that case again, claiming no less than £20,000, and on June 18th attended at King's Bench for the other affair—his sentence for libel.

The case having been once tried, there was no opportunity for speeches and agitation. Lord Mansfield had merely to pronounce sentence. But the demeanor of the Londoners had removed any wish he may once have had to be vindictive. For

each publication he imposed a fine of £500; for the *Essay on Woman,* twelve months' imprisonment; for Number 45, ten months'; and he further bound him over for seven years in £1,000 on his own recognizances and £500 each of two friends.[27] Supporters paid the fines and produced the recognizances; Wilkes left the King's Bench for twenty-two months of incarceration.

VIII

Four Times Expelled from Parliament

WILKES, when he entered the King's Bench prison, was not to leave it until April 17th, 1770. So far from this meaning for him a time of inaction, it was the most active and devastating period of his life. From his room in prison he set two countries—England and America—in a blaze. It was also far from being the most uncomfortable period of his life. The prison deprived him of nothing but his liberty. He could not go beyond the gates of the small town which the prison was; and even this limitation could be waived from time to time. He had excellent rooms and service in prison; there was a small street of shops, a coffee house and a tavern to supply any casual wants; no restrictions were placed on his visitors. Daily political conferences, if he chose, could be held with probably less danger of disturbance than outside.

Further, lest he should suffer any form of discomfort, there now arose the practice, which lasted for years, of presenting Mr. Wilkes with gifts of food. It is impossible to catalogue the good things that rushed into King's Bench prison. Collared brawn, twenty dozen of wine, and a hare were the first comers.* The Common Council of Richmond in Yorkshire sent a butt of ale; others sent baskets of game, a Westphalia ham, and a dozen of burgundy. Salmon came from Plymouth and Newcastle and six couple of teal from Heck-

*Add. Ms. 30870. As late as 1779 he received a "patriotic leg of pork" from Chippenham. (Add. Ms. 30872.)

ington in Lincolnshire. The gentlemen meeting at the Caves, Maiden Lane, sent "as a token of indignation and abhorrence" of the government, twenty guineas and a hamper of wine. The amplest gift of all, and one that held the gravest warning for the government, was the arrival of forty-five hogshead of tobacco as a gift from Maryland. Nor were other comforts lacking. Women flocked to see him, both sightseers and democrats anxious to abate the hero's sufferings; also, no doubt, professional ladies. Among the casual amours of this time was one which afterwards did him some harm. Mrs. John Barnard, the wife of a Wilkite alderman of the City (son of a famous political intriguer) had been Wilkes' mistress before her marriage. She visited him again with her husband, and without. Affectionate letters passed between them. Her first began "My dear Mr. Wilkes"; her last, "My sweetest love." It was only in his love-affairs that Wilkes did not look ahead; he took all Mrs. Barnard had to give (and there is little doubt she gave him everything *) as delightedly and as lightly as she gave it. A pretty, loose and feather-headed young woman, she regarded her infidelity to her husband as a matter of little importance, a momentary and natural physical pleasure, a tribute to her personal charms and perhaps—who knows?—even in some way a declaration of political principle. Later she was to make Wilkes pay dearly for the pleasant evenings she afforded him now.

But Wilkes' attention was rapidly turned from amusement to politics. He did not intend to allow his adversaries to have the advantage of taking the offensive, nor indeed did they attempt to assume it. George III uselessly urged on the ministry that "the expulsion of Mr. Wilkes [from Parlia-

* Cf. Add. Ms. 30880 B, p. 35. The most open letter is undated but it does not appear to be of a period previous to her marriage.

ment] appears to be very essential and must be effected"; the Duke of Grafton had far other ideas. He assured himself of the concurrence of Temple, who as he believed, was still Wilkes' political controller, and sent Almon the bookseller privately with a message to Wilkes.[1] The bargain he offered was a compact that each should let the other alone. If Wilkes would remain quiet the government would not interfere with his taking his seat. In particular, Wilkes must refrain from raising, as he had publicly announced he would, the question of the legality of the whole of his past treatment. Wilkes answered with an abrupt refusal, stating that he had made a public pledge.[2] His reply cost him the friendship of Lord Temple, who declined to forgive what he may quite possibly have regarded as insubordination.

Wilkes in his prison was meditating mischief, and he had selected two methods of annoying his enemies. The first was to present a general petition to Parliament against the whole of his treatment, which he did immediately upon the opening of the new session. As he was a Member of Parliament, his petition could not be ignored, and he further perplexed his enemies by announcing that it was necessary for his counsel to examine Lord Sandwich and Lord March in support of his allegations. The two Houses of Parliament were thereby nearly started on a serious quarrel. Could the Commons order attendance of members of the Lords at their bar? Sandwich and March had good reason to encourage the upper House to stand on its dignity. The choice of those two names must—for reasons already discussed—have suggested to them that Wilkes knew far more of the concoction of the *Essay on Woman* case than he actually did. The dispute was settled by their lordships consenting to appear voluntarily at the bar of the Commons without raising the question of whether they

attended in response to a summons or not. When they did so, Wilkes' counsel had, to their relief, nothing to ask them but a few trivial questions.

Before this, however, he had delivered his second attack —the publication, with a venomous introductory "letter to the printer," of the instructions sent to the magistrates by Lord Weymouth prior to the massacre of St. George's Fields. The instructions were temperate enough and decent in form until the concluding phrases, where Lord Weymouth had let be seen too clearly his desire to teach the Londoners a lesson. "Occasion" [for the "effectual use" of troops], he told the magistrates, "always presents itself when the civil power is trifled with and insulted." [3] These observations, Wilkes remarked, showed how long (the letter was of April's date) "a hellish project can be brooded over by infernal spirits." He also published some comments on Lord Barrington's letter of thanks after the affair [4] which were more in his usual sarcastic style. He asked who could be the "Lord B——n" whose name was attached to the letter? It could not be Barrington "because he is confessedly *sola libidine fortis*.* He knows no campaigns but in the fields of love, and in the winter in the House of Commons . . . I have another reason. Lord Barrington is an Englishman. Would an *Englishman* have thanked *Scottish* officers and soldiers for having in so inhuman a way spilt the blood of his innocent countrymen?"

The leaflet, issued in December, was at once objected to, but the dilatory methods of the eighteenth century were such that no effective steps were taken against it for two months. Meanwhile another victory was scored by Wilkes. George Cooke, his fellow member for Middlesex, died in November,

* Strong in lust alone.

and a by-election became necessary. The Wilkites put up Serjeant Glynn. Sir William Proctor, who had anticipated the succession to Cooke's seat, stood as a Court candidate. He fortified himself once again with a bodyguard of Irish sedan-chairmen—similar in many cases to modern American gangsters—and brought his known supporters to the polls in brigades. After the mass of Proctor's supporters had voted, and there was a swell of Wilkites, the chairmen charged the crowd and rushed the hustings, knocking down the electors with clubs, stopping in many cases to finish off those only slightly damaged. George Clarke, a young Wilkite lawyer, was killed outright by M'Quirk, an Irish chairman. Despite this, the polls were opened again on Wednesday (December 14th) and Glynn was returned by a large majority. M'Quirk was prosecuted, convicted of murder, and forthwith pardoned.[5] It was once more proved to the popular mind that murder of Wilkites was condoned by the authorities. Meanwhile, Serjeant Glynn was the first Wilkite M.P., the most unlikely as he was the most useful, of Wilkes' supporters—for few men were less like Wilkes than this line-faced, half-crippled lawyer, with his fussiness, strict morals, and invalid's habits.

His election was marked by a most important step in British Parliamentary history. So axiomatic is it to-day that Members of Parliament should represent the electors that we are surprised that an expression of opinion on the part of the electors should have been regarded as a new and possibly reprehensible development. The Middlesex freeholders, after the election of Glynn, met and issued to him and Wilkes five instructions, which may be regarded as the first attempt at a draft of a Wilkite political program. The first, moved by John Horne, demanded the continuance of "our only rightful trial—by jury"; the second and third, moved by J. Adair,

required an inquiry into the St. George's Fields massacre and the riot at the by-election; the fourth, also moved by Adair, demanded an investigation into the administration of justice in Middlesex, especially the state of the Commission of the Peace; and the fifth, moved by B. Hayes, demanded the promotion of an inquiry into the right of the public to the revenues arising from the conquest of India. The issuing of these instructions and their acceptance by Wilkes and Glynn (whose supporters had instigated the meeting) vexed and astonished those who regarded a seat in Parliament as a form of property. Such instructions henceforward became the sign of a Wilkite spirit, as annoying to the Whig aristocrat as to the Court supporter.

Few enterprises that the government began against Wilkes, even the most trivial, succeeded; every victory was a Pyrrhic victory. On January 2nd, 1769, Wilkes was elected Alderman for Farrington Without. The city aldermen, zealous for the king, found a technical irregularity (the poll had been closed too early) and declared the election void. The only result was that Wilkes was reëlected on January 27th without opposition. The small royalist majority temporarily in control of the Court of Aldermen then applied to a number of lawyers to give an opinion to the effect that Wilkes was for one reason or another ineligible. After several failures they secured an opinion from Sir Fletcher Norton, which, although it had the disadvantage of being illegible, appeared to contain the desired negative. On the strength of this they voted to ignore the Lord Mayor's proclamation of Wilkes' election, and to refrain from summoning him. From this also the government derived obloquy and no advantage, for immediately upon his release, Wilkes presented himself at the

Court of Aldermen, whose courage failed them, and they admitted him.[7]

January the 27th also saw the commencement of the open war between Wilkes and the House of Commons, which was to give him his greatest popularity and his place in history. The hearing of his petition was begun. Lord North, on behalf of the government, moved, and it was carried, that Wilkes' counsel be heard only on two minor points—one, if P. C. Webb on behalf of the government, did bribe and suborn Michael Curry, the printer of the *Essay on Woman,* and if Lord Mansfield's alteration of the record was improper.[8] By these means the debate was deprived of its chief interest, and Wilkes' counsel were confined to presenting the rather weak argument on the record described in an earlier chapter of this book—that "TENOR [to which the record was changed] signifies transcript, PURPORT the general meaning." The petition was, to nobody's surprise, rejected on February the 1st. Horace Walpole the evening before had anticipated and explained the result: "The affair of Wilkes has been a fair trial between faction and corruption; of two such common whores the richest will carry it."[9]

It was known that the government had made up its mind to expel Wilkes from the House of Commons on the next day, February 2nd, on the ground of his action in writing and printing the attack on the government for its action over the St. George's Fields massacre. The appearance and behavior of Wilkes, who now spoke for the last time for five years in the House of Commons, were eagerly observed. Walpole, his enemy, found it unsatisfactory—"his behaviour was so poor that it confirmed what I have long thought, that he could be crushed outside."[10] To others, less conventional eighteenth-century Parliamentarians, his demeanor seemed

courageous and admirably defiant. His speech in reply to the charge of issuing "a libel" ran as follows:[11]

MR. SPEAKER,

"I acknowledge I transmitted to the press the letter of the Secretary of State and that I wrote and published the prefatory remarks to it, and, Sir, whenever a Secretary of State shall dare to write so bloody a scroll I will through life dare to write such prefatory remarks, as well as to make my appeal to the nation on the occasion. I ask pardon, Sir, that I made use of too mild and gentle expressions when I mentioned so wicked, so inhuman, so cowardly a massacre as that in St. George's Fields on the Tenth of May. I pledge myself to the House, that whenever a day shall be appointed to make this important enquiry, I will bring evidence here to prove the truth of every word I have asserted. I hope the House, Sir, will send for Ponton * and examine him, whether he did or did not receive that letter from the Secretary of State. If he answers in the affirmative, I am sure from the virtue of this House that they will immediately order an impeachment against that Secretary to be carried up to the Bar of the House of Peers.

Evidence was, in fact, formally secured that Ponton had received Lord Weymouth's letter but the intentions of the House were not directed to inquiring into the propriety of that letter. Dragooned by the king into a semblance of firmness, the government had decided to secure Wilkes' expulsion for the publication of the leaflet and also, by what seemed even to dispassionate persons unnecessary rancor, for the publication of Number 45 and the *Essay on Woman*—offenses for which he had already suffered fine and imprisonment. This triple charge was intended to assure the government's majority, for it was calculated that members who would not vote to expel him because he had libeled the government might yet do so because he had libeled the king, and those who resisted both those arguments might reject him as an obscene writer. The calculation was correct, and Wilkes was expelled by a majority

* The magistrate who received Lord Weymouth's letter.

of eighty-two despite strenuous opposition, expressed most effectively by Edmund Burke and George Grenville. The latter warned the House of Commons that Wilkes' "popular favour is not confined to this capital or to its neighbourhood alone, but is extended to the most distant parts of the Kingdom," [12] and added prophetically, "Let us look a little forward . . . Mr. Wilkes will certainly be re-elected: you will expel again and he will return again. What is to be done then and how is so disgraceful a conflict to terminate?"

Such considerations cast no shadows over the pleasure of the king, but they disturbed considerably the more sober opponents of Wilkes. The Commons' vote had brought into question not merely the growing power of the king but also the rights of the people against Parliament; and Walpole saw in it the end of the period of leisurely oligarchic politics. "Instead of dipping into Roman or Greek histories for flowers to decorate the speeches of false patriotism, principles are revived that have taken deeper root; and I wish we do not see quarrels of a graver complexion than the dirty squabbles for places and profit." [13] He who should have been the defeated and discouraged loser, Wilkes, found himself lifted up to higher pinnacles of popularity. The City, always warm for him, became enthusiastic; the wealthiest aldermen, Beckford included, lost all reserve. "I see no reason," wrote Philip Francis, "why he may not be Sheriff and Lord Mayor in regular succession, and why not Prime Minister before he dies." [14]

Wilkes was delighted; to some, indeed, he seemed too exuberant. The intentions which he ascribed to the government in his new address to the freeholders of Middlesex seemed extravagant. "If ministers," he wrote, "can once usurp the power of declaring who *shall not* be your repre-

sentative, the next step is very easy and will follow speedily. It is that of telling you, whom you *shall* send to Parliament, and then the boasted constitution of England will be entirely torn up by the roots. The Parliaments of Great Britain will become not only as insignificant as those of France, a mere state engine of government, but a grievous burthen and infinite mischief to the nation." [15] The names of the freeholders who renominated him for the new election, which was fixed for February 16th, indicated the greater power of the support which he now received. They included the names of James Townsend, M.P. for West Looe in Cornwall, J. Sawbridge, M.P. for Hythe in Kent, both men of great influence in the City, and Sir Francis Blake Delaval, one of the Delaval family whose preserves Wilkes had once tried to invade at Berwick.* No opposition candidate appeared, but some two thousand Wilkite electors presented themselves at Brentford on the day in case they were needed. Wilkes was returned unopposed, and the day closed with illuminations and musical processions all over London.

The receipt of this humiliating news stung the enraged House of Commons to another precipitate and violent action, which it took the very next day. Not only did it expel Wilkes again, but it passed a declaration that Wilkes "was incapable of being elected a member," thus destroying any possibility of dignified retreat or accommodation on its part. This action made a serious problem even worse. The government papers used it for vain and provocative menaces. Since Wilkes had been incapacitated, they argued, to vote or to receive votes for him was a contempt of the House of Commons, and the Wilkite voters and the sheriffs for the county of Middlesex

* *Annual Register,* 1769, p. 74. The others were: George Bellas, John Horne, Samuel Vaughan,—Eyre, Esq.,—Jones Esq.

could all be sent to Newgate.[16] The threat intimidated no one, nor was much more effect secured by the government pamphlets, of which the most notable was Dr. Johnson's *The False Alarm*. This tract, which few have been found to praise, argued that the right of permanent exclusion was inherent in the House of Commons, since otherwise an expelled member could be at once reinstated and the authority of the House made purely nominal and ever ridiculous. It was replied that a legal disability could not be inflicted by a resolution of the House of Commons; it could only be the result of a law, passed by the whole legislature.[17] This controversy scarcely affected the root of the matter. Even if king, lords, and commons had combined (as they might well have done) to pass a perfectly legal instrument declaring Wilkes incapable of being elected, the indignation of the public would have been in no way abated. What the House of Commons, as the king's tool, was charged with was a spiteful and tyrannous exercise of its power of expulsion. This power, which was not at the time questioned, was intended to be used only to remove persons universally regarded as of abominable and disgraceful character, whom no constituency would be likely obstinately to return. But Wilkes was, as everybody knew, not being attacked on moral and personal grounds at all. Men of the foulest character, far his inferiors, Martins and Rigbys and Lowthers and Luttrells, were allowed to sit unchallenged. Vices as notorious as his had stained the Treasury bench for years. The *North Briton* in 1762 [18] observed charitably that court records showed that the members of the then government were much given to "gallantry" and of each of them "anyone can recollect an hundred entertaining anecdotes"; and it was about the same time that the king insisted on retaining the inane Lord Hertford as a minister in order to have about

him at least one person not of known immoral character. Wilkes was expelled, not for his loose tongue nor personal unchastity, but because he was the last remaining effective opposition to the king. The House of Commons having been purchased, the Whig opposition being finally reduced to powerlessness, the nominee of one of the few incorruptible seats alone represented a force which was still unquelled. The City of London and its environs were the sole unassailed obstacle to George's aspirations to a recovery of Stuart autocracy. Henceforward, though the king's hand is hidden, the struggle is more and more one between George III and London, and the conflict is continued, under Wilkes' direction, right through the American war until the time of the Gordon riots of 1780.

The magnitude of the issues involved persuaded the supporters of Wilkes that some form of organization was needed to direct the contest against the government. Three days after Wilkes' third expulsion, on February the 20th, the wealthiest Wilkite supporters in London, directed by Horne, formed the Society of Supporters of the Bill of Rights. Its public advertisements [19] gave its objects as "to maintain and defend the legal, constitutional liberty of the subject," and added that the members proposed to support "Mr. Wilkes and his cause."

It was not the intention of the founders of the society that its sole activity should be the "support of Mr. Wilkes" and in particular his financial upkeep. Various efforts were made to extend its activities, and as soon as it appeared that Wilkes' debts had been mainly met, a ballot for admission to the society was decided on, as in the early days of the society the necessity for high subscriptions acted as a deterrent. Horne, after his quarrel with Wilkes, in a series of venomous letters charged him with opposing this change and

resenting Horne's desire that the society should support "the expense of public measures" and "important objects of public advantage." [20] Whether this be true or no, the quarrel between Wilkes and Horne shattered the power of the society and it was never able to do much more than settle Wilkes' financial affairs. This was in itself a considerable task. The excellent city gentlemen who were induced to form the society probably believed that four or five thousand pounds would see the end of the matter, and felt that such a sum might properly be raised, as Wilkes' financial crash was due directly to the expenses and disasters of his exile in the cause of liberty. But once it became known that men of means were interested in paying Wilkes' debts, a flood of claims poured in upon them. New, larger, and incontestable demands took the place of every settled account and at one time the society began to fear that the end would never be reached. Wilkes had never kept effective accounts himself, and in his absence his affairs had been directed by Humphrey Cotes, whose name was now a byword for incompetence and credulity. With no documents behind them, the society's directors could not challenge even the most suspicious claims. Seventeen-year-old debts, due to de Silva, and other Jewish money lenders, were demanded with all the inflation that manipulation of deferred interest and consciousness of impunity could suggest, and every other Paris or London tradesman presented some bill for luxuries or necessities which Wilkes could neither deny nor authenticate. By June, 1769, £4,500 had been paid out for his debts and another £2,500 was being issued. In 1770 the accounts of the Society showed over £12,000 paid for Wilkes' private debts, £2,973 for his election expenses, £1,000 paid for his fines and another £1,000 issued for his personal support. Six thousand eight hundred twenty-one pounds of debts was further

outstanding, which was also paid, with the exception of an account of £200 from Aylesbury to which the committee demurred. Eventually when the society ended its task, about the time of Wilkes' release from prison, Wilkes was left with a net income of £350 a year and a lump sum of £2,000.[21] Twenty thousand pounds chiefly for private debts was a surprising figure, and seems a more impressive one to-day. But the public was later to learn that it was by no means extraordinary. The nation had to pay £40,000 to settle the private debts alone of the younger Pitt; the Wilkites were fortunate that their leader had neither Pitt's profusion nor his appetite for port.

The mere establishment of the society relieved Wilkes' mind of any anxiety he may have had over his finances—not indeed that he seems ever to have been much troubled—and he entered on the third election contest with a light heart. The government had with difficulty secured a candidate. Sir William Proctor, overwhelmed with unpopularity since the killing of a Wilkite by one of his "bludgeon-men," absolutely refused another contest, but Charles Dingley, a quarrelsome business man and ex-soldier of Golders Hill, agreed to stand. He presented himself at Brentford on election morning, March 16th, but the Court supporters were craven enough not to stand by him. He faced with commendable courage an unfriendly crowd for an hour or more, waiting for a freeholder to step forward and nominate him. But no such voice was raised, and eventually he retired, having heard nothing but personal abuse and speculations on his ancestry. Forthwith John Wilkes, amid laughter and rejoicing, was declared returned unopposed as Knight of the Shire for Middlesex. And the next day, obstinate and apparently impervious to

ridicule, the House of Commons declared the election null and void and ordered another.

Three sensational elections and the prospect of a fourth had created immense excitement, but it had been good-humored excitement. A darker feeling, of anger and apprehension, was imparted by the rumors which now came that the government was about to enter the struggle in earnest, and to present a serious candidate with full official support. The chosen champion was found to be Colonel Henry Lawes Luttrell, who already sat in the House for Bosinney, a pocket borough. He was believed to be Wilkes' personal enemy and known to be a boastful and violent man, ready with his sword. The popular party suspected at once a plot to trap Wilkes once again into a duel. For the rest, his personal character was infamous: he added to Wilkes' profligacy a habit of "bilking" his mistresses and of seduction of the innocent. His appearance was sinister and somber, of the stage villain type. He was on the worst possible terms with his father, Lord Irnham, and it is recorded that he once refused a challenge from him to a duel, on the ground that Lord Irnham was not a gentleman.[22]

When his candidature was announced, two other candidates unexpectedly appeared on the scene. They were Serjeant William Whitaker and Captain David Roche. Serjeant Whitaker was no more than an overclever barrister, who hoped that in the conflict between Wilkes and Luttrell, a third candidate, of mild Whig views, might slip in. Captain Roche, known as the Tiger, is a more mysterious figure. He appears to have acted as a caricature of Luttrell and a bodyguard of Wilkes. He was twice as boastful, but in the same manner, as Luttrell, twice as quarrelsome, and with a character at least as unsavory. His election address was a parody of Luttrell's,

line for line, and wherever Luttrell went boasting and ranting, Roche followed with wilder boasting and ranting, delivered in an even more extravagantly military manner.[23] It was generally supposed that he was put up by the Wilkites partly as an ambulating practical joke on Luttrell, partly with the more serious function of a lightning conductor, to draw to himself the provocations Luttrell was expected to offer and to see that if there was fighting to be done, it was he and not Wilkes that was involved.

Despite this pleasantry, the temper of the Londoners grew more and more menacing. It was no longer entirely safe to parade loyalist opinions in the City. A deputation of merchants who carried an obsequious address to St. James' Palace passed on their way through showers of mud and stones. "Wilkes and no king," a new cry, resounded in the streets. The "large escort of horsemen" who should have accompanied Luttrell to the hustings on April 13th failed, except for some twenty, to turn up, and those that did were prevented from riding farther than Hyde Park. Luttrell himself reached the hustings at Brentford only through the cold protection of James Townsend, Wilkes' nominator.

The poll was declared the same evening, and it removed any apprehensions the Wilkites may have had. The figures read:

John Wilkes	1,143
H. L. Luttrell	296
W. Whitaker	5
D. Roche	0

Again this result was followed next day by a declaration from the House of Commons that the election was null and void. This every one expected, but not every one expected

what followed. The next day the House accepted a motion by George Onslow, until recently a professing friend of Wilkes, to the astonishing effect that Luttrell "ought to have been returned." No act, even one so despotic and arrogant as this was, is taken in politics without an attempt at justification. Onslow offered the House the pretext it needed, by his suggestion that as Wilkes was ineligible the votes cast for him must be regarded as "thrown away" and consequently the next most popular candidate must be regarded as elected. It was thus only by a small accident that Middlesex did not find itself represented by Serjeant Whitaker or even Captain Roche. Jesuitical as this reasoning was, it satisfied the king's majority, and the decision taken was made explicit on May the 8th, when in reply to petitions of protest from Middlesex, Westminster, London and Southwark, the House formally seated Luttrell as Member for Middlesex. In combating this monstrous decision, the Whig opposition recovered some of its one-time energy. Burke, in a sentence recalling the phrasing of the playbills, described it as "the fifth act of a tragi-comedy—a tragi-comedy acted by His Majesty's servants, at the desire of several persons of quality, for the benefit of Mr. Wilkes and at the expense of the Constitution."

Outside, the news was received by the London populace with a silent fury far more menacing than their previous exuberance.

IX

"Wilkes and Liberty"

The events of the last twelve months had shown clearly that the Wilkites "held the street," in the French phrase. There was little doubt that when they chose, as they had already done once, they could take the control of the capital out of the hands of the government and military, and assume it themselves, being by now assured of the support of the immense majority of its inhabitants. But the control of London was not enough. Paris in 1789 and 1792 was able to turn discontent and disorder into revolution only because it had behind it the support of the majority of the provinces. London, though never before had it been worsted in a serious conflict with the king, was fully aware that it had but little support beyond its walls. Wilkes of intention always discountenanced bloodshed and violence, but had his ideas been otherwise, he must still have realized that an insurrection by London in defense of the freedom of the electors would have expired unsupported after an initial success. In the countryside there appeared, in the early stages of his conflict, to be but one Wilkite stronghold, Aylesbury. This borough sent to its new members a request to take no part in attacks on its ex-member, and the Corporation flew a flag from its town hall with the words "Wilkes and Liberty" inscribed in gold.[1] The Wilkite feeling in the small town was vigorous and long-lived. It was not extinguished till 1834, when the last Wilkite, a man named Guest, died at a very advanced age;

up to the day of his death he would, when drunk, dress in an overcoat presented to him by Wilkes on the death of George II and parade the main street, roaring "Wilkes and Liberty" to the perplexed inhabitants.[2]

Such support was more personal than a matter of principle, and in any case the adhesion of Aylesbury was more gratifying than important. It was necessary for some organized action to be taken to bring to the support of London the electors of the provinces. These were largely farmers and squires, generally wholly unused to political thinking, sometimes inclined to Toryism. To reach them mentally was difficult enough; to reach them physically even was not easy. "A family, as things now stand," wrote the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1752, "or a party of ladies and gentlemen, would sooner travel to the South of France and back again than to Falmouth or the Land's End; 'tis easier and pleasanter. So that all beyond Sarum and Dorchester is to us *terra incognita,* and the map makers might if they pleased fill the vacuities of Devon and Cornwall with forests, sands, elephants or what they pleased."[3] Roads, though improved by the turnpike system, were still abominable, and in our eyes scarcely roads at all. Between Ashborne and Derby, in the same year, they were "almost impassable. Sometimes we were buried up to our horses' bellies, and at others we rode on such dangerous precipices as had almost endangered our falling. Certainly the roads in England are the most disagreeable."[4] Coaches indeed ran fairly frequently, but their departures and arrivals were uncertain and "connections" might involve a wait of as much as three days. When a coach was secured, its discomforts were such that no modern traveler would submit to them. Inside was no glass and scarcely any ventilation, outside, a German traveler, Carl Moritz, in 1782 thought he was

facing "certain death." "The machine rolled along with prodigious rapidity over the stones through the town and every moment we seemed to fly into the air, so that it was almost a miracle we still stuck to the coach and did not fall." Having nothing to hold on to but "a sort of little handle," Herr Moritz became so alarmed that he crept into the basket for safety's sake, and as the coach crawled uphill, congratulated himself on his happy idea. "But how was the case altered when we came to go downhill; then all the trunks and parcels began as it were to dance around me and everything in the basket seemed to be alive, and I every moment received from them such violent blows that I thought my last hour was come." [5]

Other difficulties which might face the emissaries of Wilkes in this hitherto unexampled political campaign were indicated by the gibbets which dotted Hounslow Heath, Finchley Common and other open spaces where traveling was frequent. In some places these were as close as five within as many hundred yards, each with its decaying occupant, whose presence was a memorial to a long or short career of robbing or murdering travelers.* At intervals, the roads in certain areas were destroyed by the trampling of cattle, sheep and horses driven to Stourbridge and other fairs, which left the chief ways impassable morasses of sticky mud. Natural disasters—much rain, much drought, snow or subsidence—were left to do their will, and an inhabitant of a place so near London as Kensington complained "that the road to London was impassable and that he was like a person 'cast on a rock in the middle of the ocean.'" [6]

*It should in fairness be said that wanton murder—murder not in self-defense—was rare. Few English highwaymen were brutes like Turpin. Of the French highwaymen Littré's *Dictionnaire* (*s.v. detrousser*) gives the rule of thumb *"on detrousse les passants, on fait le contraire aux filles."*

In face of these difficulties, it was clear to Wilkes and his advisors that certain parts of George III's domains could not be canvassed effectively at all. The most distant settlements of English citizens—the American provinces—could be reached only by correspondence, and they were left, with results which were later startling, to Wilkes himself. Nearer home there were still "bad lands" which it was no use to till. Scotland was for obvious reasons no field for Wilkites. In addition, its representation in Parliament was without exception venal; the whole kingdom was one vast pocket borough, and the pocket in which it lay was the king's. Nor were the newer towns gradually rising into prominence in the North a much more hopeful field. Such distant places as Liverpool, of relatively recent prominence, retained for thirty years more a general devotion to the king and to Tory policies, just as in the twentieth century distant New Zealand cultivated an ardent imperialism which London had begun to reject. The nearer counties were likely to be the most sympathetic to Wilkes, and they were fortunately also the most populous. The huge towns and new industries which made the North of England the most important part of the country during the next century did not yet exist. The most densely settled centers were still the West Country textile districts and East Anglia; Bristol and Norwich were, after London, the chief towns. Wales, like Scotland and Ireland, was deemed to be partly barbarous; north of Derby the country was, except for Yorkshire, barren and empty. In turning to the rich and civilized South, Glynn and other itinerant Wilkites were confident of appealing to the major portion of the nation. Today we should not regard, indeed, these regions as rich and civilized. Wild villages, in which the stranger was likely to be pelted as an "outcomeling," were surrounded by enor-

mous commons given over to darnels and thistles. Pasturing upon them were the treasures of an inert peasantry—scabby sheep, skinny geese, and lean, wild and bony-rumped cows, of breeds now forgotten, who contemplated the traveler with reciprocated distrust and fear. Scientific drainage, rotation of crops, and economical tillage were unknown, though camped at frequent intervals in the countryside were country houses of more or less magnificence, surrounded sometimes by ornamental gardens, and occupied by a squire who received still a semi-feudal respect and obedience. Great houses, such as Stowe, were not those which would open their doors easily to Glynn, but the smaller houses, with gentlemen-farmers within, might be persuaded to listen. As for the towns, they reproduced many of the features of London; they smelt the same and their inhabitants' occupations were similar. They should be easily persuaded. To these, then, the group which surrounded Wilkes confined itself, and adhesions from further out were regarded as gifts from heaven; these included in the next three years formal thanks from the Constitutional Society of Dublin and a ceremonial address to "My Lord Wilkes" from Warsaw by the Count Jutakoski *"chambelland due roi de Pologne."* [7]

To undertake such a campaign at all was to make Parliamentary history, as the Wilkites had done twice already. They had made history once when they defied the ban of Parliament, and they had made history when they introduced the practice of issuing instructions to members of Parliament —an example now followed by Bristol, Westminster and Southwark.[8] Now again they introduced fresh political practices. To organize a political campaign at all was an innovation, and the method chosen was another new thing. This was the revival, or introduction, of *public meetings,* and from

this historians of every school date the beginning of the popular control of the government. The importance of these innovations can scarcely be estimated by a generation which accepts them as an automatic part of political life. Only by an effort to imagine political life without them can some idea be gained of their value. No limit to the autocracy of bought members of Parliament, no communication of voters' will to their members, no consultation between like-thinking men of different counties, no meetings to discuss public policy—in such circumstances what régime would be possible but that of Sir Robert Walpole?

Records are fading, and it is no longer possible to trace the method and itinerary of the Wilkite emissaries. The accident, for example, that has left the names on a petition in a cartoon legible, alone enables us to know that the unlikely counties of Pembroke, Carmarthen and Carnarvon came to the support of Wilkes.[9] But some letters preserved in Wilkes' correspondence give us glimpses of the campaign.[10] J. Green toured the home counties; he writes from Aylesbury and from Bedford. William Ellis apparently swept a wide circle; he first arranges a freeholders' meeting in Truro and then one in York. S. Sayers covered Devizes—for Wiltshire—and Bristol. Serjeant Glynn in the autumn of 1769 made a triumphal journey down to the Southwest ending in a great meeting at Exeter.

The object for which all these meetings were held was to secure the presentation of petitions against the conduct of the government, and it is clear that with some naïveté the petitioners expected that heed would be given to their remonstrances. Their two M.P.s backed the petition of the freeholders of Yorkshire. In Bristol the signing of the petition was organized from parish to parish. Somerset County meet-

ing was held at Wells and was unanimously in favor.[11] Petitions were secured also from Newcastle and even Liverpool, from Gloucester, Buckinghamshire, Surrey and Middlesex. "Lord B." (perhaps Lord Bute), attempting to secure a counter address in Exeter against Glynn, had to fly for his life, pursued by cries of "Wilkes and Liberty." Alarmed by the immense success of the Wilkite agitation, the king sent out calls to the lords-lieutenant, sheriffs, judges and other certain agents to secure counter petitions and loyal addresses.[12] Such were easily secured from the subservient and venal Scottish seats, but otherwise much difficulty was found, and the effect of George's call was to enhance rather than diminish the turmoil. The king secured a counter petition from Liverpool, loyal addresses from a few London and some Bristol merchants, and satisfactory petitions from Oxford and Cambridge Universities, Shropshire, Leicester town, Kent and part of Surrey. Wilkes counted, by the autumn of 1769, Middlesex, most of Surrey, Buckinghamshire, Yorkshire, Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Hertfordshire, Northumberland, Durham, Derbyshire and Wiltshire; London, Bristol, Exeter, Wells, Durham City, Berwick, Southwark and Westminster.[13] To these supporters must be added towns which other isolated scraps of evidence show to have been adherents of Wilkes—Richmond (Yorks), Dover, Norwich, Swaffham, Newport, Deal, Portsmouth and Kings Lynn, where the Corporation presented him with the freedom of the city and the title of *Pater Patriæ* (father of his country). The balance was heavily on the side of Wilkes, and the intervention of the king had on the whole assisted this, by ending the timidity of those who doubted the propriety of expressing an opinion on the affairs of their own country. The resultant number of signatories amounted to the then

astounding number of 60,000.[14] They waited confidently for an answer, believing trustfully that the king whom they revered would make some acknowledgment, if not afford some redress. But the king's speech on the reassembling of Parliament dealt with the diseases of horned cattle.[15]

To explain this unexpected and sardonic slight, the spokesmen of the government in the House of Commons offered a defense which illuminates the class division which was becoming clearer as Wilkite agitation developed. "They observed that the majority of gentlemen of large fortunes, of justices of the peace, and of the clergy, in some of the counties, had not signed the petitions . . . that the inferior freeholders were not capable of understanding what they signed; that the farmers and weavers of Yorkshire and Cumberland could neither know nor take any interest in what befell the freeholders of Middlesex, if they had not been set on by seditious and factious men, by grievance-hunters and petition-mongers . . . that if even a majority of such freeholders had signed petitions without any influence or solicitation, they were only to be considered as the acts of a rabble, and of an ignorant multitude, incapable of judging." [16]

Marked as this class division was becoming in the provinces, it was even more striking in London, where Wilkes' supporters were notoriously overwhelmingly of the working class. "It has been said," observed a tedious publication called *The Wilkes Jest Book,*[17] "that in the neighbourhood of St. James Mr. Wilkes' enemies are 45 to fifteen; in the City his Advocates are 45 to fifteen; and in Wapping his Staunch Friends are 45 to none at all." Stephen Fox, in the debate seating Luttrell, said more discourteously that Wilkes had been chosen "only by the scum of the earth." [18] Sir William Rough in his review of his father-in-law's life found it neces-

sary to make it clear that there were in fact Wilkites not of the working class:[19] "It was not the mere populace only that supported him. He was looked up to by the middle ranks of society as a martyr for their rights." Little support was received from the Anglican clergy—though one country curate amended the Litany to read "and shew Thy pity on all Prisoners and Captives, especially the patriotic John Wilkes, Esquire"[20]—but the less respectable forms of religion were swept away in the popular current, and Whitefield prayed before his sermon for the release and success of a notorious evil-liver and reputed blasphemer.[21]

But the sympathy of the artisans and small employers of London with Wilkes was not expressed only in their prayers. A percentage of them had votes, and the control of the City itself was, if they chose to exert themselves, ultimately in their hands. Because they had had but little interest in politics they had been content to allow city politics for years to be the scene of an easy-going conflict between the Court party and the Whigs, the latter being generally in the ascendant. This year they asserted suddenly but effectively their control. The City meetings were packed by enthusiastic and obscure liverymen who cast aside their apprehensions of the previous year and accepted or rejected candidates exclusively according to their attitude on the Wilkes case. At the Midsummer Day meeting of the Livery, for the selection of sheriffs, they chose Townsend and Sawbridge, two eminent Wilkites in the City, and further voted to present to the king a petition against the behavior of Parliament which was couched in unusually vehement terms. This meeting was reported by Burke himself:[22]

(*June 24th,* 1769).—This day I squeezed myself into Guildhall, where I remained until four o'clock; and I assure you that I am not much more than barely alive. It is very possible that the newspaper

may give you a full account; but then it is possible, too, that it may not, and I know you will be desirous of some sort of idea of this extraordinary day: take such an account as I can give you while the chaise is getting ready to carry me to Barnet.

The Hall opened at one o'clock by the Recorder * attempting to speak; but as often as he repeated there arose such a prodigious concert of hissing, groaning, shouting, hallooing, as I never heard upon any occasion, or in any place. At length he desisted, and went back in despair. Sam Vaughan † upon this came forward, and in a very decent and proper speech endeavoured to persuade the Livery to hear him, as the officer who, in the necessary course of business, must open the court. He [the Recorder] told them that he had no intention of obtruding upon them any opinion of his own; that he stood there merely to inform them *ex officio* upon what business they were met; that it was the election of Sheriffs, etc., etc. On his concluding arose a loud and continued cry of "Petition! Petition!" which at length subsiding a little, the Lord Mayor began to speak, and was received with a mixture of clapping and hisses. He gave them his honour that if they would proceed to the regular business he would afterwards put any questions which they thought proper. The cry of "Petition!" still continued as vehemently as ever. Vaughan again appeared; he tied down the Mayor to his promise; he depended upon it; he advised the Hall to rely upon it; and strongly recommended to the Livery that they should first proceed to the election. The Mayor and Aldermen then withdrew, and the following real candidates were proposed. Several others had been drank to by the Mayor, but they were not properly candidates; indeed, the two first may perhaps come within the same description, though they are put in nomination every year.

Sir J. Hankey,‡ very much hissed, and not one hand; Sir W. Baker,§ very much clapped, but no hand; Ald. Plumb,‡ horridly hissed, but no hand; Ald. Kirkman,‡ pretty well hissed, four hands; Mr. Waggoner,‡ much hissed, and no hands; Mr. Rossiter,‡ hissed more than any, and no hands; Townsend, Sawbridge, all hands, and a thunder of clapping, shouting, etc., repeated several times. It actually shook the hall, and much exceeded any idea I had ever entertained of the effect of the human voice, however exerted. After this, the other officers were elected. Nothing remarkable, except that a Mr. Townsend

* Sir James Eyre, Court supporter.
† City merchant, Wilkite.
‡ Court supporter.
§ Whig.

was chosen auditor with very great applause, the word going round that he was James Townsend's brother; however, it was not so.

The Mayor and Aldermen returned to the Hall, and reported "duly elected" on several offices in the manner I have mentioned. Then Mr. Lovell (chairman of the meeting of the Livery at the Half Moon) made a speech; not a bad one, had it been less oratorical. Indeed, I am rather rash in saying so, for when he bawled, as a true orator ought, I did not very well hear him; when he spoke under his voice I heard him very distinctly. He ended by reading the petition. It is in substance the same as that from Middlesex; but I think it brings more home to the King's Ministers, not the present only, but the past; and calls for redress in very strong terms. It has all the absurdities of the Middlesex petition, but I think (as well as I could hear it) that it is a more direct attack, better pointed, and in most places better expressed; but it is impossible for me to judge with any degree of precision. Ladbroke * came forward, and, after a good deal of clapping and hissing, he told them that he spoke merely to signify his intention of obeying their commands. The applause was then general and unmixed. Beckford made his usual speech—short Parliaments—every article of the petition true—some articles true—most articles true—all that he had heard true—heard very little—his duty to obey any commands of his constituents, provided they are wise and reasonable commands, and so forth. However, one expression he did use, which I think bold—"that all our misfortunes arose from a corrupt and venal Parliament." Trecothick then spoke; but I did not hear a single word. The applause, however, was as full as if all had been heard. It was, indeed, very great, and nothing but that given to Beckford could exceed it. On the question for the petition there was not a single hand against it. One man, indeed, attempted to make a speech in opposition to it, but his voice was drowned in a cry to throw him off the hustings. Thus it was carried with all possible triumph and exultation. The conduct and management was able; and except the clamour of applause and censure, nothing resembling tumult, considering the assembly and the occasion. If the Ministry can stand this, the people have no influence.

But many of Wilkes' supporters were not freemen of the City and even those that were welcomed other means of expressing their feelings. It is with some diffidence that a his-

* Sir R. Ladbroke, M.P., Court supporter.

torian claims to have discovered an outbreak of political strikes in the eighteenth century; he risks being reminded that 1768 was not 1926. But it seems improbable that the sudden outburst of strikes, in a year in which the whole working class was so deeply stirred by the case of Wilkes, should have no political feeling mingled with its economic causes. The coincidence would be too strange and in addition we have two distinct pieces of evidence. The first is that the strikers are described as shouting "seditious cries." There were but two seditious cries in 1768, one was "Wilkes and Liberty" and the other was "Long live King Charles," and there is little doubt which was favored in Wapping and Southwark. The second bit of evidence is the explicit statement of Horace Walpole that the economic conflicts were "excited by the agents of Wilkes." [23]

There had been trouble even at the beginning of the year 1768, caused by the master weavers who lowered the price of the Spitalfields journeymen's work by 5d. a yard. In so doing they caused a strike of the most important single industry in London, and in the excuse they offered they caused furious riots between the single-loom weavers and those who used the new "engine-loom." But this disturbance was overshadowed in the summer by a far more sensational strike, or mutiny, that of the merchant sailors. They came out both in support of Wilkes and for an increase of wages. They stopped all outward bound traffic in the port. Their numbers were estimated at 4,000. The excitement of Wilkes' various trials, general discontent, and the massacre of St. George's Fields swiftly brought to their side the journeymen hatters and then the Thames watermen. Before long followed the journeymen tailors and then the glass grinders. The coal-heavers, an irascible, muscular and opinionated body of men, abandoned

their work and held a mass meeting in Stepney Fields, where they decided to march on the Houses of Parliament and secure attention to their complaints. This they did, causing considerable alarm, and reached Palace Yard, where the famous magistrate, Sir John Fielding, who probably alone could have done it, addressed them and induced them to disperse. They remained, however, on strike; the sailors, who had secured an increase of wages and veered round to loyalty, attacked them and were defeated in a furious battle. In June the military were called out in an effort to break them up. Henceforward the records are scanty; though it is known that in August Spitalfields came out again and in the winter the Southwark joiners and hat dyers.*

During the rest of Wilkes' imprisonment there occurred two further events which increased his popularity. One was the trial of his case against Lord Halifax for damages suffered during the "general warrants" affair of 1763. Wilkes had asked for £20,000 damages—roughly the amount of his total debts, which he argued were caused originally by Halifax's action. The jury in their verdict delivered on November 11th, 1769, awarded Wilkes what seems the reasonable sum of £4,000, but the audience was so incensed at the diminution of the figure that the jury had to leave by a side door. It was all one to Halifax, for he had prudently secured from the Lord Privy Seal a warrant indemnifying him in advance against any loss incurred by proceedings such as these.[24]

The second event was the support of Lord Chatham (Pitt). He had ended his nominal membership of the government in 1768 and had long ago recovered his popularity

* They expressed their disapproval of non-unionists by escorting them round the borough seated on an ass, face to tail. For the accounts of this outburst of strikes, see *Annual Register*, 1768, pp. 57, 105, 108, 113, 114, 124; 1769, p. 124; 1770, p. 74.

in the city, but gout and perhaps policy had condemned him to inaction. In the winter of 1769-1770 he recovered his energy and began a vigorous and public attack upon the government and House of Commons for its behavior to Wilkes. At the new year he moved—vainly—an amendment to the address, inviting the royal attention to this as one of "the causes of the prevailing discontent," and in May (to anticipate a little) he presented a bill in the House of Lords reversing the judgment of the Commons in the Middlesex election. His speech was reported to be fully worthy of his great days, and when the bill was rejected thirty-three peers, including Lord Rockingham, took the unusual course of signing a written protest.[25]

It may be, as is suggested by the later intrigues of Shelburne, that Chatham's sudden approval of London's support of Wilkes was partly due to a fear that this great center of power should fall into the hands of a man whose views and policy were not entirely his. But whatever may have been his private plans for the "reconquest" of London, the city suspected no such *arrière pensée*. It rejoiced that its advocacy had been so resoundingly approved by incomparably the most eminent statesman of the day, and its zeal and impetuousness were correspondingly increased. But the intervention of Chatham had another result whose importance was not at the moment realized. It made impossible the further retention of office by Grafton and the few other ministers who had taken office as "Lord Chatham's friends" in 1766. The first to go was the commander-in-chief, the Marquess of Granby, whose name is still seen on so many public houses. Grafton and the others, draggled and depressed, resigned their posts on January 27th, 1770, and the Prime Minister, in appearance, became Lord North, a Tory lord who was to hold that

position for twelve years. But the real Prime Minister was George III himself.

After a succession of more or less unsatisfactory Whig ministries, the king had at last secured a chief minister who was without embarrassing alliances and politically subservient to his will. North sometimes remonstrated, but he never resisted. The cabinet met only when George himself desired a discussion upon some particular point; the ministers reported to him direct and underwent his direct influence. With enormous industry he directed not merely general policy, but details of management. He instructed North as to which motions should be made in Parliament, what arguments advanced, and how opposition should be frustrated. He reserved for his own selection all patronage, reviewed the staff of the various government departments, nominated judges, law officers, and bishops himself, issued commissions and even directed the movement of troops. Henceforward, though the power of the radicals had enormously increased, so had that of the king. For twelve years George III was absolute ruler of the British empire.[26] When Wilkes was released from prison on April the 17th, 1770, he had to lead an attack against a power as strong as, indeed stronger than, in the days of Bute.

X

Sedition in America and London

AMONG the letters of Wilkes now preserved in the British Museum are several which are signed by names afterwards very famous in American history. It is likely that Wilkes kept only those which it was safe to preserve, and it is certain that at one time written instruction was supplemented by conversations with an instructed emissary. But what remains is of considerable interest, though it has received little notice beyond the passing attention of the Massachusetts Historical Society.[1] Yet it was a matter of common agreement at the time that the resistance of Wilkes to oppression had an immediate effect upon America. "The reasonings used," wrote Rough,[2] "in relation to [the Middlesex election] and the sentiments naturally awakened . . . are asserted to have occasioned the American war. Certain it is that the arguments by which the justice of that war was impugned, derived much of their force with the public from the freedom with which the right of representation and its supposed consequences had previously been canvassed." The popularity of Wilkes has left its mark on the map of America. Wilkes County in Georgia has disappeared, but Wilkes County in North Carolina has Wilkesboro as its chief town, and Wilkes-Barre in Pennsylvania founded in 1769 commemorates both him and Colonel Isaac Barré, another friend of the colonists.* Chil-

* The writer of this in 1928 visited Wilkesbarre and had the curiosity to ask at the Wilkes Hotel who was the man after whom it was named. The answer, after hesitation, was "a Democratic Senator." Spelt with small initial letters the answer would have been correct in the eighteenth century.

dren were named after him and perhaps the last trace of his once enormous popularity was seen a century later when the murderer of Abraham Lincoln was found by a grotesque chance to bear the name of John Wilkes Booth.

The progress and occasion of the quarrel between the American colonies and the British government are well known, but it may be convenient to recapitulate them briefly. The Treaty of Paris in 1763, by ending French rule in America, had relieved the colonists of an ever-present fear and removed the chief cause of their immediate dependence upon Britain. At the same time as their will and power to resist oppression were thus increased, the British government felt the need of extra revenues to meet the expenses incurred partly at least in defense of the colonies. Parliament, without much reflection—Lord Temple and other Whigs concurring—imposed in 1765 a Stamp Act which extended to the colonies the British system of stamp duties and would have drawn revenue from a large number of commercial activities. Somewhat to the surprise of the home government, the most intense annoyance was caused in America by this intervention in internal affairs. The popular assemblies of Virginia, inspired by Patrick Henry, and of Massachusetts Bay, led by Samuel Adams, headed the opposition. Organized violence prevented the application of the Act, and in 1766 when the existing government fell, the new Rockingham ministry repealed it, passing at the same time, however, a "declaratory act" affirming the right of Parliament to tax the colonies. Scarcely had this act been passed, when the weak Rockingham ministry fell. In the new ministry, effectively headed by the Duke of Grafton, the king's policy again asserted itself. Charles Townshend, the feather-headed Chancellor of the Exchequer, delighted his master by proposing and carrying in 1767 revenue acts which

imposed duties on paper, glass, lead, painters' colors, and tea. The resistance to these was intensified by the previous American success. Its center was Boston, and in that city it was organized and directed by the Sons of Liberty, a spontaneous organization which had sprung up in the previous conflict. The struggle occupied the anxious attention of the Americans in 1768, 1769, and 1770, nor was its acerbity noticeably diminished by the curious action of the home government in the last-named year, by which the other duties were repealed and that on tea retained as a warning and irritation.

Wilkes' connection with America was of an early date. He does not seem to have had any relations with his elder brother Isaac, who had emigrated thither, but in 1758 he was in correspondence with one Thomas Barrow, who sent him political and military news from Philadelphia and New York.[3] He had some supporters in Maryland, as has been observed, who sent him tobacco just as Boston sent him turtles, while the South Carolina assembly in 1769 actually voted him £1,500—£10,000 in their currency—to pay his debts,[4] an action which caused a fierce dispute with their Governor. But his chief connection was with the group of men who were to occasion, and in its first stages direct, the American revolution—the Boston Sons of Liberty.

The bundle of letters which lies in the Museum bears a strange appearance at first reading. The division between British and American does not exist in them. Benjamin Kent, one of the most frequent signatories, observes "it seems to me that Great Britain and the colonies must stand or fall together." Stranger still is the profoundly respectful attitude of the writers. Names like Quincy, Hancock, and Adams now bulk enormous in American history; Wilkes is forgotten. But here they are small men patiently soliciting the attention

of a great man, following his actions closely in the hope that they may with their small resources imitate his large success, trusting that a victory for him may ultimately solve their problems, begging him to attach their grievances to the list of his own demands, and almost too obviously throwing upon him the responsibility for any "conflagration" that may come. They formed in the eyes of the world but one section of the great mass of British supporters of Wilkes, and they would not at this time have objected to the description of themselves as "Wilkites," although their party was more suitably embraced in the general appellation of "patriots."

The letter signed by W. Palfrey which escorted the two turtles to England makes it clear that Wilkes had for some time been in relations with "the gentlemen of our committee." [5] But how far back this may have gone is unknown. The first important communication is dated the 6th of June, 1768, and as it gives the tone and color of the whole correspondence, deserves quotation in full:

Illustrious Patriot:

The friends of Liberty, Wilkes, Peace and good order to the number of Forty-five assembled at the Whig tavern, Boston, New England, take this first opportunity to congratulate your country, the British Colonies and yourself on your happy return to the land alone worthy such an Inhabitant: worthy! as they have lately manifested an incontestible proof of virtue in the honourable and most important trust reposed in you by the county of Middlesex—

May you convince Great Britain and Ireland in Europe, the British Colonies, Islands and plantations in America, that you are *one* of those incorruptibily *honest men* reserved by heaven to bless and perhaps save a tottering Empire—that majesty can never be secure but in the Arms of a brave, a virtuous and united people—that nothing but a common interest, and absolute confidence in an impartial and general protection, can combine so many Millions of Men, born to make laws for themselves; conscious and invincibly tenacious of their Rights.

That the British constitution still exists is our glory: feeble and infirm as it is, we will not despair of it—To a Wilkes much is already due for his strenuous efforts to preserve it. Those generous and inflexible principles which have rendered you so greatly eminent, support our claim to your esteem and assistance. To vindicate Americans is not to desert yourself.

Permit us therefore, much respected sir, to express our confidence in your approved abilities and steady Patriotism; your country, the British Empire and unborn millions plead an exertion at this alarming crisis. Your perseverance in the *good old cause* may still prevent the great System from dashing to pieces. 'Tis from your endeavours we hope for a Royal "Pascite ut ante boves"; and from our attachment to "peace and good order" we wait for a constitutional redress: being determined that the King of Great Britain shall have Subjects but not Slaves in these remote parts of his Dominions—

We humbly present you the Farmer;[6] his sentiments are ours—

If we dare lisp a wish to be indulged with a line from you, a direction to John Marston Esq., at the Whig Tavern, Boston, would assuredly reach the hands of, worthy sir

your most faithful and obed^{t} humble Servants

Benjamin Kent
Tho Young
Benjamin Church junr
John Adams
Joseph Warren

} Committee of the Sons of Liberty in the Town of Boston

Boston 6th June
1768
John Wilkes Esq.

Wilkes' reply, in which he promised "always to give a particular attention to whatever respects the interests of America" gave universal satisfaction. A special meeting of the Committee of the Sons of Liberty was called to hear it read and begged permission to publish it. Now that the adhesion of so distinguished a politician had been secured, members of the committee wrote anxiously personal letters to

interest him even further. Of these letters that of Benjamin Kent shows how far the moral rigidity of Massachusetts could be relaxed when an ally so powerful was needed. He begs the privilege of better acquaintance "with a man whose mental features seem as strongly marked as those of his face." He explains that he used to be a dissenting minister "thirty years since" but was expelled for heresy. Wilkes, who has laughed at the Athanasian creed, must be of a similar spirit; he hopes that Wilkes is a theist and knows he is a good man—he only ventures to ask for an assurance because the Boston Tories call him "an abominable blasphemer and uncommonly wicked, but I know the last charge is false." Even the *Essay* is excused. "I never expect to see what you wrote on Woman, but if I should find anything which is called too Luscious, I assure you I am well fortified by the revolution of sixty cold North American winters, which have hoar'd my head." He ends with an ardent assurance of the adherence of the most respectable Bostonians—"Dr. Sr, I have the pleasure to acquaint you that you stand very high in the Estimation of a great many the most worthy amongst us." [7] Palfrey, Wilkes' most assiduous correspondent, writing in February, 1769, says roundly and underlines it, *"The fate of Wilkes and America must stand or fall together."*

Wilkes in March wrote again to the Sons of Liberty, agreeing to the publication of his letter, assuring them of his devotion, outlining in detail his policy concerning America, and, as was his invariable custom, urging them to refrain at all costs from bloodshed and to exercise patience to that end. Thenceforward there was a steady stream of letters, asking for and receiving information and guidance and expressing mutual esteem. Palfrey wrote to this effect in April, as did also Joseph Warren; Palfrey wrote again in June, and in

July, Thomas Young explained that Boston was anxiously watching Middlesex and wanted all possible information, if he would be so kind as to send it, in order that it might follow the same methods. Letters from Church, Palfrey and Young explain the rapid changes of scene in Boston which have prevented yet another formal address being sent by the committee, though "four or five draughts" have been made. The Governor in August had left amid public and insulting rejoicings, and Thomas Young, with others, believed that events were moving to a violent decision. "Stand fast, my Dear Sir!" he cried. "Should the rising flame utterly consume every enemy to our happy constitution, our children's children shall be informed the quondam Colonel of the Buckinghamshire regiment kindled and (through all the dangers that could threaten his existence) supported it." Palfrey in October noted that Boston was awaiting the result of the county petitions organized by the Wilkites—their non-success may explain the little use made of this weapon by the Americans. The formal address of the committee was not dispatched till November the 4th. It described the oppression of the city—how the State house was occupied by soldiers, the harbor by the fleet and the exchange by revenue officers. The "licentiousness" of the military against persons of both sexes was encouraged, it stated, by the imposition of trivial sentences, and it concluded with a suggestion that France or Spain might now strike to recover their lost dominions. The signatories bore names destined to become famous—James Otis, Samuel Adams, John Hancock, R. Dana, Joseph Warren, Benjamin Church, Jr., Benjamin Kent, John Adams, Thomas Young, Josiah Quincy.[8]

But before this a safer means of communication than open correspondence had been discovered. In August an emissary

left Boston for London, named Samuel Eliot. His letter of introduction to Wilkes as " a firm friend to the cause" remains among Wilkes' papers and from that time regular correspondence ceases, or at least is not preserved. There is a letter of December, 1770, from Samuel Adams urging Wilkes to make the chief part of his program to confirm and increase the rights of the colonies, and there is further an important formal letter of March 23rd, 1770, which contains a "Document" of the meeting of the freeholders of Boston, ordering three persons to communicate with Wilkes, who send to him an account of "the massacre in this town on the fifth inst." [9]

But the affairs of America were not those which received Wilkes' attention first on his release. His immediate care was to consolidate his position in the City of London and to stimulate it to further activity. His own position was secure when he was accepted as alderman without demur on his release and in July was further elected master of the Joiners' Company. There appeared, at the moment, little to be done but to proceed with the petitions to the king and Parliament. The rejection of the first petition had surprised the City, which was reluctant to believe that its protests could be treated with neglect, and to a very late date continued almost pathetically to refuse to recognize the intentions or the power of George III. The Wilkites had already decided to follow the rejection with a Remonstrance—in itself a somewhat daring thing—to be addressed to the king in person. The City had the right of personal approach to the sovereign, and now that the conflict was rapidly becoming a direct one between George and a section of his people, that right was not as to-day a mere formality.* It was at least a sufficient annoyance to the king

* The last time it was thought that direct approach to the king might be of political importance was in 1926, during the days when the Conservative government was taking action which provoked the general strike,

to induce him to attempt to evade it. When he was informed that the sheriffs and remembrancer wished to wait on him with the Remonstrance, he instructed Lord Weymouth to challenge their credentials, nor were they allowed to present it until, after long delays, they had shown that they appeared "by direction of the livery in common hall legally assembled" and that the Remonstrance was "the act of the citizens of London in their greatest court." On the 14th of March they were at last permitted to read to the king the Remonstrance which was of so vehement, or, as they termed it, "indecent" a character that the Goldsmiths', Grocers' and Weavers' companies had declined to attend the meeting which passed it. The recorder, a Court supporter, refused to be present at the interview and the common serjeant broke down when he attempted to read it. The king answered to it with considerable heat that it was "disrespectful to me, injurious to Parliament and irreconcilable to the principles of the constitution."

Such an end to the interview was far from satisfactory to the City. The Londoners felt that they had been snubbed, and their vexation was enhanced by a remark made in the House of Lords by a Lord Pomfret, that "however swaggering and impudent the behaviour of the low Citizens might be on their own dunghill, when they came into the Royal Presence their heads hung down like bulrushes, and they blinked with their eyes like owls at the rays of the sun." [10]

To undo this impression at least was Wilkes' first interest. He first moved that, for his contumacy, the legal business of

and for a day or two afterwards. It was suggested that the Labor members of the Privy Council might use their right of direct approach to George V and induce him to intervene and put pressure on the Prime Minister to end the conflict. But it was pointed out that, whatever might be the views the king was supposed to entertain, he could hardly receive a Labor Privy Councilor without at least one of the Conservative ministers in attendance, and would presumably follow the suggestions of the latter, his official advisor.

the City be taken away from the recorder, Sir James Eyre, and handed henceforward to Serjeant Glynn, which was agreed after lengthy debates. Proceedings were begun against the master of the Grocers' Company which established (though the decision was changed in after years) the power of the Lord Mayor to enforce the attendance of companies at common hall.* Finally a fresh common hall was called and another petition adopted, of which Walpole said "a bolder declaration both against king and Parliament was never seen." The petition was presented on May 23rd. Wilkes, who with Horne had arranged the proceedings, did not attend, observing that "the air of most courts was corrupt and contagious and that of St. James's particularly did not agree with him." The petition was read, the king replied with an abrupt and curt refusal. Then to the horror and icy astonishment of the court, Lord Mayor Beckford stepped forward and "answered back" to the king. The words, except in so far as they deplored the absence of a promise of redress, were respectful and loyal—it was the mere fact of answering that was shocking. The court was visibly discomposed and the petitioners retired in glee. †

Their delight was shared by the Common Council of the City, which ordered the erection of a monument to Beckford in the Guildhall, where it still stands. On its black marble base is engraved in gold the text of the lord mayor's speech; above is his statue, a creditable likeness in which the worried

* The Goldsmiths repudiated their master's action. *Annual Register,* 1770, p. 107.

† Horne characteristically enough afterwards alleged that he had invented the speech and his claim has convinced one biographer, Sir William Treloar, (*Wilkes and the City,* p. 100) that Beckford never spoke at all. Apart from the improbability of this story, it is destroyed by the fact that before the next interview with the king, the Chamberlain demanded an assurance that the Lord Mayor would not again answer the king in this manner (*Annual Register,* 1770, p. 111).

expression of his long lean face is well preserved. It is the last monument that records any defense of freedom by the City of London. Since Beckford's day the City has forgotten its original principles and become a center of the most extreme Toryism, while by the shifting of population, its institutions and ceremonials have been left to become the expensive toy of a handful of wealthy business men.

Private as well as public anxieties had been worrying the lord mayor. Depression overcame him, induced, some said, by a reflection on his temerity as much as on the lamentable condition of public affairs. The next month his devotion to duty led him to expose himself too much, he fell ill and on June the 21st was dead. With the death of this much respected West India merchant there was removed from Wilkes' path the only City politician whom he could not hope to rival. The others—James Townsend, James Sawbridge, Richard Oliver, Barlow Trecothick—who were much in the popular favor, might be envious of him, and indeed soon showed that they were, but they could not bear down the man to whom, after all, they owed most of their present popularity.

But for the moment these jealousies were hidden. The first efforts of Wilkes were directed to relief of the poorest citizens, his chief supporters, and were ardently seconded by the new lord mayor, who bore the curious name Brass Crosby. "Profiteering" in corn was stopped, or at least gravely hindered, on January the 4th, 1771, by the posting at Mark Lane market by Crosby's orders of the prices and amounts of corn deals and the names of dealers, to the great annoyance of the dealers. An equally vexatious practice was attacked by Wilkes almost at his earliest sitting as a magistrate. Nobody who has studied the eighteenth century has failed to comment on the sufferings caused by impressment. Almost any able-bodied

poor man, especially if he had the misfortune to be sailor-like in appearance, was liable to be seized by the press-gang, quite probably knocked on the head, and certainly dragged by force on board ship, there to spend the rest of his life, torn from his family, almost without pay, and suffering the terrible conditions under which seamen then served. Wilkes boldly declared press-warrants illegal and discharged Shine, a pressed man brought before him. Crosby followed by refusing to back any press-warrants. An agitated meeting of Common Council on January 15th attacked the action of certain Court aldermen who continued to back press-warrants and thus to nullify the system of bounties for enlistment of which the City had approved. At its meeting a week later the council decided to prosecute in the name of the City all justices who granted or backed warrants and all constables who arrested on the strength of them.[11] Counsel's opinion later declared, however, that press-warrants unfortunately were undoubtedly legal, but only if backed by a city magistrate. Nevertheless some at least of Wilkes' object had been achieved: reckless uncontrolled pressing in London had been checked and the bounty system generally took its place.

XI

Victory in the City of London

THE next conflict between Wilkes and the Crown was one which with his usual wrongheadedness George III sought himself. Irritated by the freedom of the London press, which was protected by the jurisdiction of the City, he suggested to the Lords that action should be taken against it on the grounds of privilege.[1] It was indeed probably the fact that in law any reporting of the proceedings of either House was impermissible, and could be punished by the House concerned. Such reporting had gradually grown up without legal permission, and once it was suppressed another possible check to the royal despotism and the corruption of Parliament was removed. The royal suggestion was canvassed and eventually it was the House of Commons which took action. In March, 1771, Wilkes' one-time friend George Onslow formally denounced R. Thompson, printer of the *Gazetteer,* and John Wheble, printer of the *Middlesex Journal,* for having published reports of debates of the House of Commons. Many others might have been selected, including the printers of the *Annual Register* in which Burke regularly described the proceedings of Parliament, but the desire of the king was to strike at London.

Immediately upon hearing of this, Wilkes held a consultation with Almon [2] and later communicated his plans to Lord Mayor Brass Crosby and Alderman Richard Oliver. The two printers, who were ordered to attend the House, on their suggestion secreted themselves. The Commons, without carefully

considering the legality of their action, issued a proclamation offering a reward of £50 for the arrest of the printers, to whose names others had now been added. After the lapse of a week (March 15th), John Wheble was "arrested" by his own chief compositor, E. T. Carpenter, who brought him to the Guildhall, where by a strange accident Mr. Alderman Wilkes happened to be officiating as sitting justice. He heard the case with becoming gravity, and then declared that as there appeared no reason for arresting Wheble except an illegal proclamation, Wheble must be discharged. He bound over Carpenter upon a charge of assault and, granting him a certificate of having arrested Wheble, sent him off to the Treasury to claim the £50 reward. In case his action should be overlooked, he also wrote to his old enemy Halifax, once more Secretary of State, saying that he had discharged Wheble as his arrest had been "in direct violation of the rights of an Englishman and of the chartered privileges of a citizen of this metropolis."

His intention was, as so often before, to provoke the House of Commons into intemperate and foolish actions. He soon had evidence that he had succeeded. Enraged by what they termed the insolence of the City, the House sent down messengers to seize the recalcitrant printers and bring them to the bar of the House. One of them, J. Miller of the *Evening Post,* received the messenger in his house. Immediately the messenger touched him he appealed to a constable who had been stationed within call, and charged the messenger with assaulting a freeman of the City of London within the city's limits. All three proceeded forthwith to the Mansion House, where the Lord Mayor, Wilkes and Oliver were anxiously awaiting their arrival. The three heard Miller's complaint and the messenger's charge, made long faces and ordered the

messenger to give bail for so serious an offense. He was naturally unable to do so, and the three magistrates forthwith signed an order for the committal to jail of a messenger of the House of Commons—a startling event which was prevented only by the intervention in a great fluster of the deputy-serjeant-at-arms, who provided the bail demanded.

If the Commons had been angry before, they were almost demented when this news reached them. The attendance of Lord Mayor Crosby and Alderman Oliver and Wilkes was immediately ordered. Wilkes replied with a refusal to come. He was, he wrote, Member of Parliament for Middlesex and until he was invited to attend in his place as a member he would not come near the place. Brass Crosby and Richard Oliver attended in their places as members for the City. Their attitude was not calculated to soothe the anger of the insulted "king's friends." The attack on them was made with the utmost vehemence; expressions of rage rarely heard at Westminster were hurled at them from the government benches, but they remained indifferent. Crosby, a great bulk of a man, replied seated, for he was struck with the gout. He had been coached by Wilkes, and, his face flushed with the exertion, bellowed confidently in his loud harsh voice that he was chief magistrate of the City of London, and guardian of its charter, that the intervention of the messenger of the House was an illegal violence, that the warrant was not even backed by a City magistrate, and that he would always, while he remained Lord Mayor, behave as he had done at the Mansion House. Dark, small and sallow, Richard Oliver beside him whipped the indignation of the House by repeating similar sentiments in a voice less loud but more venomous. The furious majority sent for the clerk to the lord mayor and with childish rage ordered him to cut out the record of the case and forbade—by

what right they did not say—the course of law to proceed. To the demand of Crosby to be heard by counsel on the charter of the city they returned an angry refusal, and at length, infuriated by their continued contumacy, surprised themselves and the world by sending the two M.P.s to the Tower.[3]

Outside, the population of London was raging. The Houses of Parliament had been saved from storming only by the intervention of the chief reformers, and the lord mayor and Oliver only arrived at the Tower because Crosby pretended that the serjeant-at-arms was a personal friend whom he was taking for a drive. Once again, the Wilkites held the street; but their leaders held their followers back from unconstitutional action. The Common Council was immediately summoned and passed a vote of thanks, confidence and support; it further decided that a table should be spread for Oliver and Crosby at the City's expense in the Tower—in other words that their food and upkeep be the City's charge. Their custody, as may be imagined, was forthwith one long festival, and for variety they had the visits of deputations bringing addresses of admiration from Caermarthen, Stafford, Newcastle and all parts of London. They were also presented with the freedom of Bedford and Worcester,[4] and the most distinguished leaders of the opposition—Rockingham, Portland, Manchester, Keppel, Burke—visited them to offer their congratulations.

Nor were the printers forgotten, for the Supporters of the Bill of Rights presented them with £100 each.[5]

The House of Commons had still to deal with Wilkes, who boasted himself the originator of the whole affair. To summonses to attend the House he returned the same answer as before. He desired nothing more than a fight, and even George III for a moment saw wisdom—"have nothing more to do with that devil Wilkes," he said. At last the House of

Commons found a way out "more necessary than honourable." It ordered Wilkes to attend on April the 8th and immediately voted to adjourn until April the 9th, to spare itself the sight of his continued disobedience. To save its face it appointed, with the solemnity of ballot, a committee to consider further steps to reduce the printers to obedience. After a while this committee reported no more than that it would be advisable to take J. Miller into custody. And here the matter rested. Miller was not arrested, Crosby and Oliver were automatically and triumphantly released on the rising of the House, and no further attempts were made to prevent the reporting of the debates. Once more Wilkes had vindicated an item of the program which was to be that of political radicals for another century; and it was at least assured that the steps in restoring royal autocracy must henceforward be taken in the light.

Nothing pleased the City more than to hear raised in their defense the voice which was still the most powerful and respected in the kingdom. Lord Chatham strongly defended their action.

He warmly defended the City magistrates in the conscientious discharge of their duty; for the House, in committing them to prison without hearing their defence on the question of privilege, had been guilty of a gross and palpable act of tyranny; that the House had heard the prostituted electors of Shoreham in defence of an agreement to sell a borough by auction, and had refused to hear the Lord Mayor of London in defence of the laws of England; that their expunging, by force, the entry of a recognisance was the act of a mob, not a Parliament; that their daring to assume a power of stopping all prosecutions by their vote struck at once at the whole system of the laws; that it was solely to the measures of the Government, equally violent and absurd, that Mr. Wilkes owed all his importance; that the King's ministers, supported by the slavish concurrence of the House of Commons, had made him a person of the greatest consequence in the kingdom; that they had made him an Alderman of the City of London, and representative of the County of Middlesex; and now they would make him Sheriff, and in

due course, Lord Mayor of London; that the proceedings of the House of Commons in regard to this gentleman made the very name of Parliament ridiculous. . . .

But this defense preluded a serious attack upon Wilkes' power. Shelburne, Chatham's chief assistant, had no desire to see the City fall into the hands of Wilkes. The attack that his subtle and indirect mind contemplated was aided by Wilkes' own errors of deportment. The attitude of the aristocracy to the city merchants in 1770 was not unlike the attitude of the British governing class to the trade unionists of to-day. They despised them for their lack of culture and jeered at their imperfect manners, but vaguely feared them at the same time as representative of an uprising class. The Shelburnes and Rockinghams courted the City and relied on its support, but could not resist poking malicious fun at the merchants' bad grammar and accent. They, or their entourage, spread the story that the City had voted as an inscription for one of its respected departed—

> Here lies William Curtis, our late worthy mayor,
> Who has left this here world and has gone to that there.

—and delighted in anecdotes about gross table manners at the Guildhall which left the feelings of aldermen and common councilors very raw. Wilkes among his new friends was unquestionably a gentleman, with a gentleman's manners, as Dr. Johnson testified; and he was unwise enough to let it be seen that he was aware of the difference. The jests to which the common councillors and aldermen objected seem mild enough to us, but they were enough to vex men who resented possible patronage. When a fellow diner at a city banquet took off his wig and put on his nightcap, asking Wilkes if it looked well, he received the answer, "Very well, Sir, but it would be better

pulled right over your face." To a young colleague who tried to attract his attention by saying it was very odd that he should have been born between twelve and one on January 1st, Wilkes instantly replied, "Not at all, for you could only have been conceived on April the first." When another disturbed the table by the loudness of his clamors for his food, Wilkes commented on the difference from a bear garden "where the bear is brought to the stake and not as here the steak to the bear." "I'll be your butt no longer," once said angrily Sir Watkin Lewes, a royal but slow-witted follower. "With all my heart; you know I never like an empty one," was the answer.[6] Small pleasantries though they may have been, they left ill-feeling on which Shelburne's allies could work.

At this time James Townsend was almost openly hostile, and was in any case closely allied with Shelburne, as was also Barlow Trecothick. Richard Oliver, whom Wilkes had raised from obscurity to sudden fame, was jealous rather than grateful. An accident also temporarily estranged Wilkes from the powerful and honest Sawbridge. Wilkes was presiding at a great meeting in Westminster Hall, to which he proposed that a demand be made for the impeachment of the Prime Minister. Sawbridge, with some reason, declared that this was a useless gesture, and carried a resolution in favor rather of a fresh remonstrance to the king. Wilkes was vexed and called it "only another paper kite for His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales." But he accepted the vote with as good a grace as he could: "I have a real pleasure in finding out and following the opinion of the people," he said ". . . I firmly and sincerely believe the *voice of the people* to be the *voice of God.*" Sawbridge, a bad-tempered man, was equally annoyed despite his victory, and coldness between the two became marked.

But Shelburne was aided by an ally who threatened to be even more dangerous. Parson Horne had, for reasons which are quite obscure, become eaten up with a violent rancor against Wilkes, and he had the courage to be the first to attack the popular idol in public.[7] His first attack was anonymous, and appeared in November, 1770. It was a highly colored account of the meeting where Wilkes had quarreled with Sawbridge and put him, the former, in a ridiculous light. It further said he had insulted the Westminster electors, and Wilkes appealed to Appleby's Club, which arranged the meeting. The club endorsed his account of the meeting and the two politicians —Horne had now unmasked himself—exchanged reciprocal charges of general financial dishonesty.

Early in 1771 Wilkes announced his intention of standing for Sheriff. His intention had been to take as colleague Richard Oliver, but it was conveyed to him that Oliver might refuse. He addressed to Oliver a courteous letter, complimenting him upon his defense of liberty and asking in what their political principles differed.[8] Oliver's reply was a personal insult.

Horne brought up heavier artillery. He charged Wilkes with almost every crime in a series of ferocious open letters. He accused him of "jobbing" his dependents into City jobs— Heaton Wilkes was to be chamberlain and Reynolds, town clerk. Wilkes in vain denied it; so did those involved, nor did they in fact stand for the posts. Horne also claimed that Wilkes was afraid that the Supporters of the Bill of Rights might "gain the public confidence" and not be "his creatures," and he eventually faced Wilkes at a meeting of the society on April 9th, where he was beaten by 24 votes, but retired taking with him some of the most wealthy members and shaking severely the influence of the society.[9] But the mass of Horne's charges did not even to this extent base themselves on public

interest. Much larger bulked such matters as Horne's best clothes. He complained that he had deposited with Wilkes while the latter was in Paris, one suit each of "scarlet and gold cloth, white and silver cloth, blue and silver cambret, flowered silk, and black silk," and in addition "one black velvet surtout." Wilkes, he said, being hard up had pawned this unclerical but magnificent wardrobe. Wilkes answered, and was able to prove, that he had merely left them in charge of the banker Panchauld, where they still were. He added:

> This is all I know of the *vestimenta pretiosa* * of *Eutrapelus*. I hope, Sir, the putting of them on will not have the same effect on you as formerly on him:
>
> Cum *pulcris tunicis* sumet nova consilia et spes:
> Dormiet in lucem, *scorto* postponit honestum
> Officium; *nummos alienos pascet*.†

Wilkes on the whole came out victor, and when later the enraged Horne challenged him to a duel, the public laughed at Wilkes' answer, which turns on the fact that Horne was expecting a trial for high treason:

> Sir,
>
> I do not think it my business to cut the throat of every desperado that may be tired of his life; but as I am at present high sheriff of the city of London it may shortly happen that I may have an opportunity of attending you in my civil capacity, in which case I will answer for it that you shall have *no ground* to complain of my endeavours to serve you.

This letter, however, was written after the first overt struggle between Wilkes and the "Malagrida faction," as Townsend and his followers were called. This took place on

* Expensive garments.

† With *fine raiment* he puts on new thoughts and hopes, sleeps through the daylight, neglects for a *whore* his proper duty, *feeds on others' money*.

July 3rd, 1771, when the election of the two sheriffs of the City was held. Wilkes, on Oliver's refusal, selected as a running mate Frederick Bull, a rich tea-merchant. Aldermen Kirke and Plumbe were the Court candidates. The result must have given little consolation to the Chatham Whigs, for the figures read:

Wilkes	2,315
Bull	2,194
Kirkman	1,949
Plumbe	1,875
Oliver	245 [10]

As sheriff, Wilkes' duties lay chiefly in the administration of justice, and he had for the first time the opportunity of showing what talents he had as an administrator. He set about reform with an unexpected vigor. Strict orders were issued to bailiffs enforcing humane treatment of debtors, and one was dismissed for disregarding these orders. The practice of permitting prisoners to appear in court in irons was forbidden, and the selling of places in court and the collection of fees from the public were abolished. In the letter conveying these orders to the keeper of Newgate, Wilkes and Bull wrote of the first-named practice, "It is cruelty to aggravate the feelings of the unhappy in a state of such distraction; and injustice to deprive them of any advantage for the defence of supposed innocence by bodily torture." The "freeholders' book," which was out of date, was canceled and a new one prepared. The sheriffs also made regular tours of the jails, to secure that the prisoners were well treated and in a fruitless effort to respond to an appeal to them to diminish the jail distemper. Criminal practices and blackmail by a sheriff's officer named Bolland were discovered by the wit of the new

sheriff, and the guilty man was convicted and punished. The military parades at executions were discontinued. Finally, at the end of their year's administration, the two sheriffs had penetrated to the root cause of the abuses and sufferings caused by the administration of justice, and addressed to the citizens of London a humane appeal which remained unanswered for forty years. "We submit to you," they wrote, "whether it would not be expedient for you to instruct the representatives in Parliament of this city to move for a revision of those laws which inflict capital punishment for many inferior crimes. . . . It was our care, while we paid a due obedience to the laws now in force, to alleviate their harshness by lenity and tenderness to every unhappy object." [11]

When Wilkes and Bull ended their year's shrievalty in 1772, the aspect of affairs was far from satisfactory. The defection of Townsend and his followers had shaken Wilkes' command of the City. There had always been a loyalist minority in the City, and with the aid of these new converts it was to be feared that certain organs of government such as the Court of Aldermen might show an anti-patriotic majority. The House of Commons was obdurate, and on the suggestion of Sir George Savile, the active Whig member for Yorkshire, the affronted counties had abandoned the practice of sending petitions. Outside the limits of England the prospects of liberty seemed fainter even than within. The eighteenth century was the age of *grands monarques,* and in nearly every country ancient representative institutions had been annihilated by absolute kings. Poland, the last country where such institutions had retained their power, was in this year 1772 partially divided between its rivals, and its fate was no longer in doubt. The *Annual Register* of the previous year had announced the extinction of the last traces of Parliamentarism

in France, the issue of this year carried the like news of Sweden, and it may well have seemed to many only a question of time until the same story was told of England. In the light of after history such a fear may now seem absurd; but at the time George intended, hoped, and was expected to become the peer of Louis and Gustavus. In nearly every case the predisposing causes of the fall of the Parliaments had been their incompetence and corruption, and in those respects the British house had surely signed its death warrant.

Here in the City a merely personal disagreement had set on foot a quarrel between two groups of reformers in which the king was rejoicing. Even in 1771 the dispute had been responsible for letting a courtly lord mayor (Nash) carry the election.* In 1772 followed a new conflict. Wilkes aspired to a position which might be esteemed to be higher than that of Member of Parliament—the lord mayoralty of London. By the curious constitution of the City, the livery had to choose two candidates, and the Court of Aldermen then selected one of the two. It was therefore necessary for the patriotic party to find two candidates, and the man selected for Wilkes' partner was Townsend—in an ill-considered endeavor to placate the Shelburne interest.† The two candidates were easily victorious, Wilkes leading. The figures were:

John Wilkes	2,301
James Townsend	2,279
Thomas Halifax	2,126
John Shakespear	1,912
Sir H. Bankes	2

* The figures were: Nash 2,199, Sawbridge 1,879, Crosby 1,795, Townsend 151. *Annual Register,* 1771, p. 147.

† The breach was so recent that Townsend was still prosecuting the tax collector who distrained on him for refusing to pay taxes in Middlesex on the ground that his M.P. had been excluded.

Now it was the custom for the aldermen to choose automatically that candidate who had the majority of votes. But Oliver was sheriff and a friend of Townsend. He made the return to the Court of Aldermen when the "reliable" men, forewarned, were present and before a number of the Wilkites had arrived. There was thus a small majority for Townsend. The trick was undeniable and gross, but the Wilkites had no remedy. By chicane more ignoble than any of the House of Commons, Wilkes had been prevented from becoming lord mayor, and the sole consolation of his supporters was in blackening Townsend's character, which they did thoroughly enough. By the end of his year of office Townsend's popularity had disappeared—he was described as a cheat and a liar, a flogger of small boys and a lickspittle at court, a hirer of mobs to annoy city processions, a coward or alternatively a quarrelsome bully; his grammar was bad and his table manners worse.

Again in 1773 Wilkes presented himself as candidate. This time he selected as his partner Frederick Bull, and the contest was a straight fight between these two and Shelburne's followers Sawbridge and Oliver. The result was:

John Wilkes	1,690
Frederick Bull	1,655
John Sawbridge	1,178
Richard Oliver	1,094

—an easy victory for Wilkes. Once again the two names were brought before the Court of Aldermen. Townsend, retiring mayor, occupied the chair. He voted against Wilkes; there was a tie; he used his second, casting vote against him again. Bull, the second on the list, was selected as lord mayor.[12] The Luttrell case seemed to be about to be repeated indefinitely in the mayoral elections. Wilkes was unable to do

more than announce to the livery that he would ceaselessly stand for election with colleagues of his own choice, so that if he could not himself become lord mayor, he could at least dictate who should.

In the same year he conducted a fresh raid on the Commons. A special call of the House of Commons was required by the Prime Minister, and the sheriffs, Richard Oliver and Sir Watkin Lewes, summoned Wilkes instead of Luttrell for Middlesex. Wilkes presented himself on April 26th at the Petty Bag office and attempted to get his certificate as an M.P.; when the clerk refused, he complained to the House. He had previously sent a general letter to the Speaker—now Sir Fletcher Norton—and "Wilkite agents" had secured addresses denouncing the Commons from "constitutional societies" in Durham, Northumberland and Newcastle. He received, of course, no satisfaction from the Commons, nor when he presented himself again in similar circumstances at the beginning of next year. Irritating though these attacks were to the House of Commons, they brought Wilkes but little advantage. He felt his hands tied; he was struggling against an overwhelming power, and it was small consolation to know that the small strength he had was a great vexation to the king.

On only one political question was he able to make his voice heard. The chief matters before the House of Commons were the affairs of the East India Company. The company was in great difficulties, and a bill was presented by the government giving the Crown some power over its affairs. Further, a resolution was presented from the opposition censuring the enormously wealthy Lord Clive for his rapacity while in India. On May 29th the loyalists and Wilkites in the city joined in unexpected alliance and denounced both

proposals. Alderman Kirkman, the Court supporter, moved the resolution in Common Council, Alderman Wilkes seconded; the decision was unanimous. There was no hint of the opposition which was already stirring among the Whigs and which in the end drove Burke into his famous onslaught on Warren Hastings. Clive, indeed, was Wilkes' ally, and when Wedderburn (a shifty lawyer, afterwards Lord Loughborough) lost his seat for speaking in Wilkes' favor in 1769[13] Clive gave him the pocket borough of Bishops Castle.

Wilkes here as in many other things was a true representative of the policies of the two classes that he led. He represented the merchants of the city and the artisans of the city. So long as he could drive that difficult pair in common harness he was a great political force. His extinction coincides with a moment when the two attempted to take different paths. Yet he drove them for twelve years, and did so because he shared some at least of their prejudices. Burke, representing a leisured and wide-minded aristocracy, could dwell on the sorrows of the Hindus and desire to end them. His heart bled at the iniquities suffered by the Begums, but his eye could not see the evils of the English electoral system. The reverse was true of Wilkes. He felt acutely the oppressions that weighed upon the English people, but the Indians were to him and his followers only a name. The London merchants desired merely that a rich company should be assisted to solvency without royal interference. Its wealthy members—even those as wealthy as Lord Clive—should not be harassed. The workers of the city agreed. They preferred trade to be good and the companies to have money to throw about. It would have astounded them to be told that they had any responsibility for the administration of India.

But though their attention was exclusively directed to

home affairs, within that limit they made notable advances in their own political education. At its meeting of March 11th, 1773, the livery in Common Hall bound itself "not to vote for, countenance, or support, either directly or indirectly" any candidate who would not pledge himself to support a shortening of the duration of Parliament, whose term was then seven years.[14] At the end of the year the death of Ladbroke caused a by-election in the City. Bull was nominated, and won easily. But before he was elected he pledged himself to a program of five points which, imperfect though it was, was a great improvement upon the mere cry "Wilkes and Liberty." The first four points bound him to support bills for (1) shorter Parliaments (2) the exclusion from Parliament of pensioners and placemen (3) "to establish a fair and equal representation of the people in Parliament" and (4) to redress grievances and secure the popular rights "in Great Britain, Ireland and America"; by the fifth he promised not himself to take crown money in any way.

The next contest for the office of Lord Mayor occurred in the usual course at the beginning of October. Some surprise was caused by the announcement that Wilkes had again chosen Bull as running mate; for this he had a particular reason which he did not divulge. Sawbridge, who was becoming reconciled with Wilkes, declined to stand, and the Shelburne faction could find no candidate. The Court party put up two weak candidates, Aldermen Esdaile and Kennett. The king alone expected a Court victory; for every one else the issue was not in doubt. The figures when announced read:

John Wilkes	1,957
Frederick Bull	1,923
Sir J. Esdaile	1,474
B. Kennett	1,410

Victory in the City of London

The names of Bull and Wilkes were again presented to the discontented loyalists and Whigs, who formed a narrow majority of the aldermen. They were again preparing to defy the livery by choosing Bull, when, as appears from the original voting paper ("scratched paper") preserved in the Guildhall, an act of common council of the reign of Henry VIII was brought out and read to them. By its terms the aldermen were forbidden to elect the same man for lord mayor two years running. In other words, Bull was not eligible and the election of Wilkes was compulsory. The aldermen submitted, though a few, including Oliver, defied legality and voted for Bull.

The news was received with rejoicing that exceeded even the celebration of Wilkes' release from prison, and lasted far into the night. The lord mayor's show that followed was of unparalleled magnificence and attracted a crowd greater than had ever before attended.

Immediately on top of this triumph came another. A general election was being held, and Wilkite candidates appeared in many places, to the irritation of both Whigs and "king's friends." Their progress was watched with an anxiety wholly disproportionate to their relatively small numbers. Walpole rejoiced that "Cotes has failed at Westminster" and wondered how it was that a Wilkite had captured Dover.[15] Westminster was lost by sheer bad organization—three Wilkite candidates were presented for two seats, and Edmund Burke as well. In the City of London all candidates were presented with the five points accepted by Bull the year before —with the significant change that the reform of Parliament was now placed first on the list. All the Wilkites signed, as did also Oliver, who explained that his opposition to Wilkes was personal, based on the grounds of his "pernicious and

detestable practices"; his success, he said, would "encourage a succession of Impostors."[16] Three Wilkites—Bull, Sawbridge, and Wilkes' brother-in-law, Hayley—were elected, while Oliver managed to keep out Crosby. About a dozen Wilkites in all were elected in the new Parliament. Among them were Wilkes himself and Glynn. They accepted a program which varied in a slight but significant detail from that of London—there was added to it a promise to move for the repeal of the recent acts affecting America.* They presented themselves on election day at Brentford, but no opposition candidate appeared; nor, when Wilkes arrived at the House of Commons, did anybody this time dare to oppose his entry.

* *Annual Register*, 1774, p. 152; 1775, p. 37. An attempt was made to make this system of "tests" or pledges general, but there were too many rotten boroughs, and the Whigs in general replied that such promises were "derogatory of their character as senators."

XII

Lord Mayor and M.P.

A FADED dignity still surrounds the lord mayor of London. Though his control is limited to a small scrap of the city of to-day, though his constituents are chiefly absentee voters and he himself generally an unimportant and rich business man, though his magnificence is chiefly meaningless waste, yet few can watch his carriage and outriders clatter up to the Guildhall without some emotion, even though their feeling be chiefly the melancholy that comes from contemplating the fading of an ancient glory. Great powers are still in name vested in him. No soldiers may pass through his city except on his written permission, he is the chief magistrate and his colleagues are his aldermen, his police are free from Home Office control. But the city which was once packed close with merchants' houses is now for the most part an aggregation of tall concrete office buildings and financial houses, empty at nights and in the day filled by employees whose votes and civic interests are in Ealing and Golders Green. This hollow principality, when Wilkes was at its head in 1775, was filled with vigor and power. Within the limits of the city charter the lord mayor was possessed of power which a baron might have envied; let him step outside it and he suffered at once the penalty of the jealousy that his independence excited. Brass Crosby, for example, had just recently overridden and humiliated a number of the chief Whig leaders in a matter which concerned them personally. Finding that Matthew

and Patrick Kennedy, two murderers in whom they were interested, had by a considerable irregularity been let off with transportation, Crosby ignored the recorder's protests and had the Kennedys removed from the ship at Rochester, when it was on the point of sailing. "Lord Spence, Lord Palmerston, George Selwyn, Esq., and several persons of distinction" attended to plead for their *protégés,* but Crosby insisted on the trial going through to its due conclusion in a life sentence.[1] But the City paid for Crosby's independence as soon as it had to rely on outside aid. The Durham yard embankment bill was before the Commons. The City men needed a lesson; the House passed the bill in such a form that £40,000 was lost to London and given to private interests.[2]

It was not while Wilkes was lord mayor that such powers were likely to be allowed to decay. In his mayoralty occurred the shortest of the sharp conflicts in which he was engaged. That there might be no organ of government which did not bear Wilkes' scars, an unlucky impulse drove the House of Lords to challenge him in February, 1775. A freeman of the City, Randall, had used "disrespectful" words against a member of that House, Lord Lyttelton. With scarcely a cloak of legality the House ordered Randall to be taken in custody. There was no warrant, nor any semblance of a trial. Wilkes was fully prepared. Constables were detailed for the protection of Randall, who was warned to remain in his own house. "Black Rod"—the gentleman usher of the black rod, the official emissary of the Lords—entered London with his escort and found himself outnumbered. He repeated his endeavors to enter Randall's house several times, until Wilkes conveyed to him an intimation that any further attempts would lead to his arrest upon a lord mayor's warrant for annoying a citizen. Black Rod retired to Westminster and

reported to the Lords. More prudent than the Commons and less obstinate than the king, the Lords accepted defeat in silence.[3]

Wilkes' chief political conflicts, however, were now fought * on the floor of the House of Commons rather than in the City. In London his chief occupation had to be with details of administration which the eighteenth century affected to despise; and at a hasty view they may indeed appear trivial. But that is because a modern reader considers them with a knowledge of the change which was to come. He cannot read of small shops with twelve journeymen without remembering the modern factory with twelve thousand; he cannot read of the city companies in operation without seeing them effete, corrupt and gross as they were a century later; he cannot read of the Spitalfields weavers' Saturday riots without thinking of the advancing power looms, the terrors of child labor and the whole degradation of the industrial revolution. But neither Wilkes nor any other man could be expected to foresee these things and provide against them. Watt and Crompton and Arkwright were then names which had never been heard. For the moment the eighteenth century enjoyed prosperity and economic placidity, and if the sun was about to set in angry clouds, there were no eyes which perceived them.

Within the limits of the economic ideas of the century, Wilkes did all he could to assist the class which was his chief support—the working class. It was apparent that the weakening of the city companies' control, by allowing the creeping advance of pure capitalism, was injuring the standards of liv-

* Wilkes also brought the Court of Aldermen to heel when they attempted a little sharp practice over an election. They tried to seat a candidate, Hart, who had received fewer votes than his rival Neate. They may have had good reason, but they refused to hear Neate; and Wilkes refused to put the motion. He adhered to his refusal from meeting to meeting until at last the aldermen climbed down and heard Neate.

ing of certain trades. Wilkes therefore did all he could to support and revive guild authority, especially in the lower organizations. This preoccupation explains the care with which he listened to the Deputy Oyster Meters, whose complaints filled his term. Five companies owning the oyster beds of Essex had refused to pay the usual fees or wages to these operatives, whose duty it was to measure the oysters for Billingsgate market. The Deputy Oyster Meters complained that the companies had attempted to sell their oysters unmeasured or measured by unauthorized persons; the companies answered that the Meters asked for illicit *douceurs*. Both parties were found guilty and made to abandon their practices.[4] Similarly the exclusive power of the Leathersellers' Company over the trade was reimposed and reinforced.[5] No trade was too ignoble to secure his assistance. The Fellowship of Carmen and the Ticket Porters Freemen both appealed to him, as they were too poor and illiterate to prosecute, and received satisfaction against "foreigners" who were not subject to the governor of the company and ignoring the ruling of 1712, had attempted to do porterage.[6]

His chief power to tip the balance in favor of the poor lay in his authority to fix the price of bread—or rather since the loaf was fixed at a penny, to fix the size of the loaf. Brass Crosby's publication and record of wheat sales had provided the means for a check on profiteering; Wilkes applied it. He raised the "assize" to 8 oz. 11 dr. from 8 oz. 7 dr. and was proceeding to raise it further when he found himself obstructed by the traders holding up supplies. In reply, he formally charged two meal-weighers before the Common Council for "many unlawful practices . . . in the cornmarket." The Common Council inquired into his charges amid scenes of concealed ill-feeling. "Mr. Daniel Geary, a Flour Factor

being asked . . . were the markets so full of flour on 21st December last as to authorize the Mayor to lower the price of Bread?—Answer, So far otherwise that if the Trade had been done justice to, the Lord Mayor ought to have raised the Bread half an Assize." [7] Though the lord mayor objected that the corn factor's reports did not cover "wheat sold for starch," the Common Council had more sympathy than he for big traders, and acquitted the accused.

Wilkes then proceeded indirectly. He held an inquiry into the total imports of wheat from abroad and found that between January 4th and May 27th they amounted to 130,462 quarters. (The major portion came from North Sea and Baltic ports as far east as Memel; all the rest, it is worth observing, from America.) Armed with this information he was able to increase the size of the loaf, and watch to the end of the year its satisfactory growth—June 10th, 8 oz. 11 dr.; July 18th, 9 oz.; August 8th, 9 oz. 4 dr.; August 22nd, 9 oz. 11 dr.; August 29th, 9 oz. 2 dr.; Sept. 12th, 10 oz. 8 dr.; Nov. 7th, 11 oz. 2 dr.

His humanity extended beyond the usual limits. The city marshal was ordered by him to attend at Smithfield every market day and prevent all "iniquitous practices," especially the "barbarous treatment of cattle." [8] But his endeavors for the reform of city administration in general were limited by the shortness of his term of office. He secured the acceptance of a reform of court procedure which ended the power of beadles to hold up warrants indefinitely and fixed a table of court officers' fees; [9] but the more important question of the general policing of the city he could not settle. He raised the question of the advisability of continuing to sell the office of city marshal. The marshalmen, being appointed by the lord mayor, did not obey the city marshal, and previous city mar-

shals had accepted bribes from members of the various companies to connive at breaches of guild rules. "Mr. Gates, the present Under Marshall said it had been the custom formerly to receive compliments from those who kept houses of illfame, but averred he never received anything of that kind." The lord mayor may have smiled, for he knew those houses, and the council decided to continue for the minute to sell the office. Some improvement, indeed, resulted from a prohibition to the marshal from selling "victuals, beer, wine, spirits, tobacco, coal or candles"; and the marshalmen were given a regular salary, forbidden to take perquisites, ordered to obey the marshal, and appointed by Common Council.[10] But when the committee on sewers, lamps and pavings reported that the "watching" of the city required great reform, and submitted a vast project to that effect, Wilkes was near the end of his mayoralty and had to leave the question of its adoption to his successor.[11] As this was the now reconciled Sawbridge (whose election Wilkes forced by running with him as second man, as Bull had run with him) the report was adopted.

The action which he led the City to take over the war with America will be described later. One other mayoral act deserves notice. When he was sheriff he ordered that no French wines be served at any official dinners, as an answer to the story that Walpole had set about of his being a French agent. When he became lord mayor he followed the same principle, and the guests at his banquets had to do the best they might with port and sherry. Although in those days port and sherry were not so heavily fortified as to-day, Mansion House dinners must have been liverish and indigestible. From this time, moreover, dates the predilection in London business circles for heavy wines such as Madeira, and the neglect of claret and Burgundy. P. Morton Shand in his *Guide to the*

Wines of France states that he is informed on good authority that the worst claret in the world is still served in the Mansion House. This is speaking strongly, for there is a claret served in an inn at Chesham which makes the room go black; nevertheless, it is probable that from the time of Wilkes' unfortunate decision dates the decay of English taste in wine.

It is the common view, based upon Walpole's verdict, that Wilkes as a Member of Parliament was a failure. He might have been expected, holding the position he did and with his past history, to have left a name like that of Fox or Pitt. He did not do so. But whether this is regarded as failure or not depends upon the prejudices of the observer. Wilkes had no desire to shine in the manner chosen by the famous Parliamentarians of his day. He did not share the views of Fox and Burke, nor, what is more important, their opinion of Parliament. He had good reason to know the corruption and cowardice of Parliament; he could not regard his colleagues and opponents as "senators," he knew too well that Rigbys and Onslows had as their chief characteristics venality and lack of principle. He despised the House of Commons and showed his contempt intentionally and frequently. No man can be popular with an assembly to which he offers that particular form of insult, and the members revenged themselves by declaring him a Parliamentary failure.

Almost his first act was to put the whole House without exception in a state of fussy alarm by spreading the rumor that he would propose as speaker an ex-waiter who had by a queer accident been returned for a corrupt borough. When he was interrupted in a speech he emphasized his lack of respect for the House by inviting the members to let him proceed because he had sent his speech to the printers and it would be published anyhow. "Be as impudent as you can," he advised members

of the Parlimentary bar, "and say what comes uppermost in your mind. Jack Lee is the best heard of any counsel, and he is always abusing us." When one Major Scott was summoned to the bar he said to him: "I give you joy. I am glad to see you in full dress. It is an occasion on which a man should appear to the best advantage." "Joy?" said the miserable major. "What do you mean? Why, I am here to be reprimanded." "Exactly," said Wilkes, "and therefore I congratulate you. When the speaker has finished, abuse them all confoundedly, and then you will be sent to Newgate or to the Tower, and then you can be member for Middlesex or Westminster, whichever you like."[12] His speech of April 16th, 1777, upon the civil list was one of the most infuriating, because truthful, attacks to which the House ever listened. The accounts presented, he said, were deliberately incomprehensible, but it was generally known where the money had really gone. "The nation, sir, suspects that the regular ministerial majorities in Parliament are bought . . . and that the crown has made a purchase of this house with the money of the people. Hence the ready, tame and servile compliance to every royal verdict issued by the minister. . . . It is almost universally believed, sir, that this debt has been contracted in corrupting the representatives of the people." He included the king in his intentional rudeness, for he regarded the monarch and the ministerial majority in the House as a single oppressive power. His first speech delivered on January 26th, 1775, was intended to give, and gave, the greatest annoyance to George III. It was a demand that the 30th of January, on which the chaplain of the House was to deliver a special sermon on the execution of King Charles, should be "celebrated as a festival, as a day of triumph, not kept as a fast." Of the address to the throne in October of that year he said,

"Sir, I disapprove not only of the evil spirit of the whole address, but likewise the wretched adulation of almost every part of it." His interventions in debates on the civil list or royal annuities were dreaded. He would not take direct part in the family warfare against George III, for like most politicians and all historians, he disliked and despised the Prince of Wales. But he insisted on attempting to add to the list of royal pensioners the Dukes of Cumberland and Gloucester, with whom the king had quarreled, and so forced North to enter upon the most delicate and embarrassing discussion. In April, 1778, he delivered a mocking declaration of anti-Jacobite loyalty to the house of Brunswick, and his rejoicing over the king's remarkable power of procreating children had a broad and bland impropriety which was the more vexatious because it was impossible publicly to resent it.

His unpopularity with the opposition was almost as great as with the government, except that here the dislike was purely political, for his wit and geniality removed any personal resentments. He refused from the beginning to act as a member of the opposition or work in with any party arrangements. He and his twelve, whom he irreverently called the Apostles, followed their own wishes and moved their own motions without regard to the maneuvers or convenience of Burke or Shelburne. Wilkes had been deserted too often by the Whigs to be a party man; and though the new independence of the merchants' and popular representatives eventually achieved nothing, neither had the tortuous policy of the Bedfords and Grenvilles led to anything but defeat. And it may be argued that since effective resistance was impossible, it was something that there should be in Parliament a group which set no measure to its verbal protests. This, however, was not the view of the regular opposition members, and their disapproval

was shown over Oliver's motion of November 27th, 1776, against the American war, when to mark their annoyance they withheld their support and left it to be defeated by 163 to 16 votes—the last figure representing the largest purely Wilkite poll.[13]

He twice—February, 1775, and April, 1777,—moved that the resolution for his expulsion be deleted from the records of the House of Commons, but, though his speeches were elaborately moderate, met with no redress. But what in after years appears to be his most important and creditable speech was delivered on March 21st, 1776, when he moved for the reform of Parliament. His preamble contained the references to the Romans and the duties of senators which contemporary taste demanded, but his description of the decay of the representative character of the House was wholly new in those walls. "No less than twenty-two towns," he said, "sent members to Parliament in the twenty-third, twenty-fifth, and twenty-sixth of Edward I which have long ceased to be represented. The names of some of them are scarcely known to us, such as those of Canebrig and Bamburg in Northumberland, Pershore and Brem in Worcestershire, Jarvall and Tykhull in Yorkshire. What a happy fate, sir, has attended the boroughs of Gatton and Old Sarum, of which, though *ipsæ periêre ruinæ,** the names are familiar to us, the clerk regularly calls them over, and four respectable gentlemen represent their departed greatness as the knights at the coronation represent Aquitaine and Normandy! The little town of Banbury, *petite ville grand renom,* as Rabelais says of Chinon, has I believe only seventeen electors, yet gives us in its representative † what is of the utmost importance to the majority

* "Even the ruins have perished."
† North.

here, a first lord of the treasury and a chancellor of the exchequer." He analyzed the results of previous divisions in the House, and found that on the highest figures 254 votes were sufficient to secure a majority. "This number of 254 is elected by no more than 5,723 persons, generally the inhabitants of Cornish and other very insignificant boroughs, perhaps by not the most respectable part of the community." In the last phrase he was referring to the known bad character of the voters in these boroughs. He went on to point out that the population of the southern part of the island was then over five millions. He instanced cases in which Parliament had flagrantly contravened the popular wish, and went on to outline very generally the provisions of the bill which he wished to introduce—a bill which appears to have been far more enlightened than the famous Reform Bill of 1832. It was not (perhaps this was a Wilkish jest) to apply to Scotland, but elsewhere it was to annihilate the representation of rotten boroughs and enfranchise the new populous towns, and further to give the vote to "the meanest mechanic, the poorest peasant and day labourer." Whig and Tory received this proposal with equal contempt and Wilkes protested that "some share in the power of making laws . . . should be reserved even to this inferior but most useful set of men in the community."

His motion was rejected without a division, after meeting with "very jocular treatment." [14]

His other interventions in home affairs show him equally far in advance of the main body of his colleagues. At the end of April, 1777, he endeavored to secure more adequate funds for the British Museum. He demanded the enforcement of a free copy act which would automatically make of it a great free library, he advocated greater facilities for the public use

of the Museum and suggested the collection of a national gallery of painting. He repeatedly urged another subject on which he seems to have felt deeply. He supported on March, 3rd, 1779, measures for the relief of dissenting ministers and schoolmasters. Twelve days later he pleaded for the Roman Catholics, attempting to hold Dundas to his promise to bring in for them a Scottish relief bill—a promise which the minister was abandoning in face of Glasgow and Edinburgh riots. Again in April he supported general toleration: "I would not, sir," he said earnestly, "persecute even the atheist." [15]

What religious feeling Wilkes himself had is uncertain. There is no evidence that he was an atheist; everything points to his favoring "sound, pure deism" which, he told the Commons, "is almost become the religion of Europe." He remarked to Boswell, "I should no more value being raised in the same body than being raised in the same coat, waistcoat and breeches." His mind was essentially not of a religious cast, and in his private references he adhered to the frivolous tone which he perpetually used when discussing his own convictions. "I will keep," he wrote to his daughter Polly, "to my good orthodox mother the church of England to the last moment of—its legal establishment." [16] He realized that discussion of religion was hardly suitable for one so irreverent as he: "the word *liberty,*" he said of Dr. Johnson, "is as ridiculous in his mouth as *religion* in mine."

XIII

Wilkes and the American War

WILKES may have imagined that he would be allowed to take the offensive; he may even have wondered how he should satisfy the great expectations of his followers. But George III, conscious of his new power, was not inclined to remain still. Now that the Whig nobles were defeated there was no force but the popular party which remained to be crushed. Even his willfulness hesitated before a direct and forcible attack on London, and he had a healthy fear of interfering with Wilkes himself again. But these scruples would not hold him back in dealing with Wilkes' admirers and imitators in New England, who appeared weaker and more vulnerable. He had never ceased to regret the conciliatory measures of 1766 and was anxiously awaiting an opportunity to crush the Massachusetts patriots by force. At the end of 1773 he found his excuse in the famous Boston tea-party. The obnoxious tax on tea was still in force, and some of Wilkes' correspondents, with others, dressed themselves up as Indians, boarded a tea-ship in Boston harbor, and threw the tea-chests into the water.

The delighted king took action at once. Four acts were forthwith passed.[1] The first closed down altogether the port of Boston, prohibiting any trade or movement of goods. The second canceled the charter and constitution of the province of Massachusetts Bay, substituting for the elected council a nominated one, and handing to the governor the right to nominate the judges. The third empowered the governor to

remove any cases that he chose for trial to Great Britain or to another colony. The fourth did not mention the name of Massachusetts; it was known as the Quebec act. It enlists our sympathy by certain of its tolerant provisions. It extended the boundaries of the province (a recent acquisition from France), annulled the proclamation of 1763 applying British laws, restored the old French feudal laws, set up a nominated council, and legalized the Roman Catholic religion. But by no party was it regarded as a gesture in favor of toleration. Its promoter was Guy Carleton, the governor of Canada, and his motives were known to all. Canada was to be transformed into a conservative stronghold, where the king could raise an army which would not need to take the oath and which could be used to turn the flanks of the New Englanders if they dared to resist. Troops were sent out to enforce these acts—the king considered that four regiments would be enough—and their commander, General Gage, was appointed governor of Massachusetts. "If we take the resolute part," said George contentedly, "they will undoubtedly be very meek."

They were far from meek. The news of this despotic decision brought all the colonies, except recent Georgia, into an association of resistance. They met in congress and deluged England with protests. The Massachusetts assembly defied the acts and ignored the governor, calling out its own militia.

It was not till the beginning of 1775, owing to the slowness of communications, that the seriousness of the position was realized in England. As soon as it was, a wide movement of revulsion from the king's policy was felt; and Wilkes, as was natural, became the chief advocate of the Americans. Long before Chatham's famous "I rejoice that the Americans have resisted," Wilkes identified himself with the colonial cause, and by his influence brought the capital of Britain to the same side.

The war which was now beginning was never referred to by the City as "the American war," or by any such title, but always as "the civil war"; its abhorrence was expressed in the most vehement form; and there was much reason in the king's complaint that London was the chief strong place of the rebels.

Wilkes could defend the Americans both as M.P. and as lord mayor, and it was in the second capacity that he appeared at first to be most powerful. For the approach of war with America was received with apprehension and dislike by the whole commercial class of Great Britain, and it seemed for a while as though the lord mayor of London might lead a sustained urban opposition to the war throughout the island. The opposition of the two great cities of Bristol and London was expected by the court, but to their petitions were added the voices of cities which had never before counted as Wilkite and whose names make a list more nineteenth than eighteenth century in sound—Glasgow, Norwich, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Dudley, Waterford and Dublin.[2] The strongest expressions of all were naturally contained in the London petitions. The Common Council had, on February 13th, "resolved, that the present situation of our public affairs, in consequence of the severe proceedings against the American colonies, is so exceedingly alarming, that it is the duty of this court to use every possible endeavor to prevent all further oppression and to obtain relief to so numerous and valuable a part of our fellow subjects."[3] Formal protest followed upon this against the four acts. Petitions were presented to the Commons, to the Lords, and then to the king, the last being couched in unusually violent language: "We, your majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects the lord mayor, aldermen, and livery of the City of London beg leave," it said, "to de-

clare our abhorrence of the measures which have been pursued and are now pursuing, to the oppression of our fellow subjects in America. . . . Your petitioners . . . plainly perceive that the real purpose is to establish arbitrary power over all America." [4]

As this was the most important of the English popular interventions in favor of the Americans, perhaps a longer quotation may be permitted:

> It is therefore with the deepest concern that we have seen the sacred security of representation in their assemblies wrested from them; the trial by jury abolished, and the odious powers of excise extended to all cases of revenue; the sanctuary of their houses laid open to violation at the will and pleasure of every officer and servant in the customs; the dispensation of justice corrupted, by rendering their judges dependent for their seats and salaries on the will of the crown; liberty and life rendered precarious, by subjecting them to be dragged over the ocean and tried for treason or felony here, where the distance, making it impossible for the most guiltless to maintain his innocence, must deliver him up a victim to ministerial vengeance; soldiers and others, in America, have been instigated to shed the blood of the people, by establishing a mode of trial which holds out impunity for such murder, the capital of New England has been punished with unexampled vigour, untried and unheard, involving the innocent and the suspected in one common and inhuman calamity; chartered rights have been taken away, without any forfeiture proved, in order to deprive the people of every legal exertion (*sic*) against the tyranny of their rulers; the Habeas Corpus act and trial by jury have been suppressed, and French despotic government, with the Roman Catholic religion, have been established, by law over an extensive part of your Majesty's dominions in America: dutiful petitions for redress of these grievances, from all your majesty's American subjects, have been fruitless.

The king was invited to receive this petition "sitting upon the throne." He resented this demand as an unparalleled impertinence. "I am ever ready to receive petitions and addresses," he said, "but I am the judge where." The City with

equal pride insisted on the petition being received on the throne. At a levee, Wilkes observed, a petition was merely handed at once to a lord-in-waiting and no answer returned. The petition was probably never even read. But if the petition was read to the king seated on the throne, at least the petitioners had the satisfaction of knowing that their remarks had been heard.[5] The dispute was acute, but old custom was on the City's side; and after an initial refusal, the king consented later in the summer of 1775 to receive a second address to the same effect, seated on the throne. It was now that the real reason for his sudden obstinacy became clear. He was acutely anxious to avoid meeting Wilkes in person. Before he received the City's representatives, he caused a lord-in-waiting to inform the lord mayor that the king would not speak to him. "The caution is needless," answered Wilkes coldly, "I did not expect that honor." The two enemies met for the first time face to face; the king received the petition and answered with a brief refusal; the deputation withdrew without incident. What vulgar uproar the king had expected no man can say, but with obvious relief he informed the courtiers that Wilkes seemed a most well-bred lord mayor.

Such intervention by London, supported by the principal other cities, would once, as the *Annual Register* observed, have been "efficacious and terrible." Even now the Americans pinned great hopes upon it, and were immediate and full in their thanks. In June a letter from the "General Committee of association for the city and county of New York" arrived which should have carried ample warning if the Court had been in a mood to accept warnings. It thanked the City for its "noble exertions in the cause of liberty" and said that the colonies "are now grown so irritable by oppression that the least shock in any part, is, by the most powerful and sympathetic

affection, instantaneously felt throughout the whole continent." [6] The letter bore ninety signatures. More interesting to-day, perhaps, is the letter addressed to Wilkes by Congress, which was received in September and gave rise to the issue of a public address to the electors against "this unnatural war." It ran as follows:

My lord,

Permit the delegates of the people of twelve ancient colonies to pay your lordship, and the very respectable body of which you are head, the just tribute of gratitude and thanks for the virtuous and unsolicited resentment you have shown to the violated rights of a free people. The city of London, my lord, having in all ages, approved itself the patron of liberty and the support of just government, against lawless tyranny and oppression, cannot fail to make us deeply sensible of the powerful aid our cause must receive from such advocates: a cause, my lord, worthy the support of the first city in the world, as it involves the fate of a great continent and threatens to shake the foundations of a flourishing, and, until lately, a happy empire.

North-America, my lord, wishes most ardently for a lasting connection with Great Britain, on terms of just and equal liberty; less than which generous minds will not offer, nor brave and free ones be willing to receive.

A cruel war has, at length, been opened against us; and, whilst we prepare to defend ourselves like the descendants of Briton, we still hope that the mediation of wise and good citizens will at length prevail over despotism and restore harmony and peace, on permanent principles, to an oppressed and divided empire.

We have the honour to be, my lord, with great esteem your lordship's faithful friends and fellow subjects

John Hancock, president.

By order of the Congress.

Verbal protest was the greater part of what Wilkes could do, but some little other aid could be furnished. The supporters of the Bill of Rights sent £500 subscription to Boston.[7] Both Wilkes and his successor Sawbridge stopped "pressing" for the royal navy. Even when war had admittedly broken out

they continued this daring action, relying upon the charter of Edward III. A man named Millaship was actually rescued, by a writ of *habeas corpus,* from a lighter which was taking him to a man-of-war. A judge, Mr. Justice Wilmot, who imprisoned a porter of the City of London under the impressment act, was prosecuted by the City until in April, 1780, after much delay, he was convicted and fined a hundred pounds.[8]

In the House of Commons Wilkes' speeches were more vigorous than those of any other advocate of America excepting Burke alone.[9] Speaking to the address of February 6th, 1775, declaring Massachusetts in rebellion and promising to "stand by his majesty," he denounced it as "unfounded and sanguinary. It draws the sword unjustly against America." He advanced the usual arguments upon taxation without representation, supported Lord Chatham's scheme for conciliation, and concluded with what was regarded as a typically wild Wilkish exaggeration. "This I know, a successful resistance is a *revolution,* not a *rebellion.* Who knows whether in consequence of this day's violent and mad address—whether in a few years the *independent* Americans may not celebrate the glorious era of the revolution of 1775 as we do that of 1688?" In October he spoke in more exacerbated tones, calling the war "unjust, felonious and murderous" and asserting, amid the jeers of the majority, that the greater part of America was lost and could not be reconquered. He supported next month Oliver's provocative motion to "discover the names" of those responsible for the proposal to tax America without its consent. He insisted that the Americans could not be defeated, they would dispute "every Thermopylæ, every Bunker's Hill." Even on this subject, on which he was most earnest, he could not refrain from phrasing which was more amusing than impressive. A nation's strength, he said, lay in its population.

"The Americans, sir, are a pious and religious people. With much ardour and success they follow the first great command of Heaven, *Be fruitful and multiply.* While they are fervent in these devout exercises, while the men continue enterprising and healthy, the women kind and prolific, all your attempts to subdue them by force will be ridiculous and unavailing."

Nor was his attitude in any way changed by the American Declaration of Independence. He was the first to recognize that the colonies were now "the free and independent states of America" and he defended the declaration in a characteristic manner (Oct. 31st, 1776). "An honorable gentleman near me, sir, attacks the American Declaration of Independency in a very peculiar manner. He pronounces it a wretched composition, very ill-written, drawn up only with the view to *captivate the people. That,* sir, is the very reason why I approve it most as a composition as well as a wise political measure; for the *people* are to decide this great controversy. If they are *captivated* by it, the end is attained."

These brave words were the braver because Wilkes was now undergoing a very strange experience—that of being on the unpopular side. In 1775 there seemed to be the strongest and deepest opposition to the war; supported by even well-known government men like General Conway and the Earl of Effingham. But in 1776 the opposition declined, and before long the tide was running strongly in the opposite direction. The war was becoming popular. It was true that the working class was not as yet enthusiastic—"recruiting, which may be considered as a kind of political barometer with respect to the sentiments of the lowest orders, went on very heavily" (*i.e.* slowly) [10]—but it was not opposed, and all classes above it were in process of rapid conversion. For this there were several reasons. The country gentlemen, who in their county

meetings had been inclined to resent the outrages of the Middlesex elections, were quite of a different mind when hostilities actually broke out between the American patriots and the home government. All their traditions compelled them to offer unquestioning loyalty to their king while an actual war was in progress. The urban opposition melted away equally surely if not so swiftly. The dislocation caused by the war was very shortlived, and was followed by a general, if hazardous, prosperity in 1776 and 1777. All industries whose services were required for war purposes—and these were many—showed rapid profits. Their owners became men of more weight in urban politics and the older pacific merchants began to lose their power. Liverpool, Manchester and the other more recent commercial towns almost at once lost their fleeting *patriotic* tendencies and became ardently bellicose; dissentient voices were even heard in London and Bristol. But the most potent cause in the decline of Wilkes' influence (for his cause was now one with the Americans') was the general belief that a speedy defeat of the rebels was certain. The first conflicts between the royal troops and the rebels had ended in the prompt and easy defeat of the latter; moreover, the government had despatched an able officer, Lord Howe, with "an army sufficient, as the sanguine thought, to look America into subjection without the trouble of a blow." [11] The evacuation of Boston by Lord Howe seemed to have been a mere happy "fluke"; the later conflicts between the British and Americans ended invariably in an American defeat. Each mail from America brought worse news for Wilkes and his adherents. In July, 1776, there appeared a flicker of hope. The government had ordered that Howe should accompany his show of overwhelming force by a conciliatory gesture, and it was reported that he had sent a letter offering peace to General Washington. But

the letter was addressed to *George Washington, Esq.* and the patriots in England heard with mixed feelings that Washington had taken the daring step of refusing even to receive the letter, saying that unless he was addressed by the title of General which the Congress had conferred on him, he would refuse to open any communications of any kind. The fratricidal war seemed about to break out again over a question of punctilio. But the quick wit of an adjutant on Howe's staff averted this disaster. A new envelope was provided, on which was written *George Washington, &c. &c. &c.,* and this the American commander consented to accept, each side interpreting the *&c. &c. &c.* in whatever manner it pleased.[12] But whatever hopes this news may have raised in London were speedily destroyed; for Washington, having consulted Congress, replied "with the utmost politeness" that as the terms offered consisted chiefly of a promise of pardon after repentance, they could not be considered. Forthwith there followed a vigorous British offensive, and a series of American defeats, some of which were reported as not even honorable defeats. Before long the English patriots had begun to despair: "everything seemed to promise a decisive event in favour of the royal arms and a submission of some of the principal colonies was hourly expected."[13]

At this moment of deep depression Wilkes made one of the few false moves of his career. It was true that he was driven to it by motives which were not political. He was once again deeply in debt; this time through no fault of his own. The Supporters of the Bill of Rights had cleared up his affairs and given him a small but sure income. They naturally did not propose to do more. But since then Wilkes had been Lord Mayor of London, a post which only a rich man could afford to hold. The expenses necessary to this post far outran its in-

come. Wilkes, without extravagance, left the mayoralty in the most embarrassed condition. His official and practically obligatory expenses had exceeded his receipts by £3,337. 7s. 5½d., and to this had to be added the customary charitable expenditure and various personal disbursements.[14] Writs threatening arrest formed a large portion of his correspondence and, what was more inconvenient, he was frequently without money for his personal needs. At this time he was "often in want of a guinea." Had he been corruptible, as his enemies said, there is little doubt that the government would have been glad to solve his problems. Fortunately (as he thought) an honorable way out presented itself to his eyes. The office of City Chamberlain fell suddenly vacant in 1776. Like many treasurerships it was a highly lucrative post, and did not involve much work. Nothing seemed more natural to Wilkes than that he should present himself as a candidate. But to his enemies and many of his friends his decision seemed most unwise. Years before, when he first began his city career, Wilkes had contemptuously put aside a suggestion of this office, believing that it would sidetrack him, and had been foolish enough to write an intemperate letter to that effect. Now his words "I never will accept it" reprinted on large posters stared at him from post and wall. There were some even of his supporters who felt that a politician who was so notoriously incompetent to manage his own expenditure was hardly the right man to take charge of the City's money. Time was to show they were wrong, but at the minute many liverymen had apprehensions upon which the Court party was acute enough to trade. It selected as ministerial candidate an elderly, mean and sour-faced man named Benjamin Hopkins. The Wilkites, for once wholly misunderstanding the feeling of the electors, fired directly at the target presented to them. They spread stories of

Hopkins' unlovable personal life—how his wards were starved, and refused access to their own money, how he ground the last farthing out of embarrassed debtors, how his commercial contracts were notorious in the city for their rapacity, how his inhospitality and miserliness earned him the detestation of his friends and relatives. The Court supporters did little to reply to this. They spoke of Hopkins' moral life and the excellent precepts with which he adorned his conversation. They encouraged him to appear in public ignobly dressed, gloomy and with the marks of austere virtue on his face. His wards, they affirmed, had benefited greatly from their forced education in parsimony and abstention from excessive food; he rarely allowed a day to pass without addressing to them or some other youthful person advice upon economy and the other foundations of business success. They pointed the contrast with Wilkes. One of their posters began:

No French whores
No French servants
No French wines,

but their most successful attacks were in the form of addresses supposed to be issued by Wilkes' supporters: "Foundlings, soldiers, Jews, Parisian Taylors and Jewellers solicit your vote and interest for the immaculate John Wilkes Esq." The most effective read:

YOUR VOTES, POLL and INTEREST
are desired for JOHN WILKES,
CITIZEN and JOINER, to be
CHAMBERLAIN,
he having more creditors
than any other person.

The liverymen felt that if the choice indeed lay between a spendthrift and a miser, they would prefer the latter as guard-

ian of the City's money. Benjamin Hopkins was elected by a majority of 177 votes. Wilkes had been defeated by a Court candidate, in a straight fight, in the City of London.

His chagrin was as great as his astonishment. He said publicly in his anger that if liberty was to be saved "it will be only by our American brethren." He contested the chamberlaincy again at each annual election, but in vain, for he contravened, in so doing, a very old custom by which the re-election of a chamberlain was never opposed except in cases of misconduct.

Just before his candidature, Wilkes found his circumstances made even more embarrassed by a loss which he had not expected. Among his wealthiest and most generous friends was Alderman Barnard, whose wife had been Wilkes' mistress before marriage and had probably been more than kind to him in the King's Bench Prison some years ago. Barnard, whose health was failing, now drew up a will leaving a large sum of money to his friend. He had scarcely done this, however, when one night his rest was disturbed by wild screams. His wife rushed into his bedroom, untidy and haggard, crying that the ghost of their dead daughter had just appeared to her and commanded her to confess to him, in order to prevent his leaving his fortune to an unworthy object, that she had been unfaithful to him with Wilkes. Barnard listened and was convinced; he ignored Wilkes' denials and cancelled his will and his friendship.[15]

XIV

The End of Wilkism

Depressed but not disheartened, Wilkes continued his agitation in the House of Commons. He spoke in February, 1777, against the suspension of *habeas corpus* and the common law in America, bearing with him a renewed petition from the City; in November he proposed the "immediate cessation of arms" in America, urging that the reports of continued victories could not be believed; in December he urged the repeal of all acts affecting America passed since 1763. But he was fighting a losing battle. Prosperity continued well into 1778, and with it grew loyalist feeling. There was, at the end of 1777, some talk of a defeat suffered at Saratoga by General Burgoyne, but the ministerial supporters were assured that it was an affair of slight importance. So strongly was opinion running in favor of the war, that the government determined to make an effort to capture the City of London itself. Horne's attack and Wilkes' embarrassments had disorganized the patriotic societies. There was obvious opportunity for a raid by a loyalist organization. The chief government supporters consequently formed a society which they called the Associated Livery, but which was more commonly known, from its headquarters, as the White Hart association. Its leaders were the chief contractors in whose hands now was most of the employment on which the liverymen depended. When voting was by show of hands, the popular candidate won as before, but the members of the White Hart association invariably now in-

sisted on a poll, and the freemen who voted against their nominees, were discharged from employment or otherwise penalized. By these means they were able to elect as lord mayor for 1778 their candidate Esdaile, a big contractor who had already two or three times fought Wilkite candidates in vain. This signal victory encouraged the government to attempt what would be a final victory—to induce the City of London to raise officially a volunteer regiment to fight the Americans. Strictly speaking this was irregular, and in April, 1778, Wilkes defied the widespread war feeling by attempting to induce Parliament to disallow these forces raised without consent. But George was satisfied that public sentiment would allow him to proceed without regard for formality. Liverpool and Manchester had raised regiments, Scotland and Ireland were expected to follow. If London could be induced to do the same, the opposition to the war might be regarded as at an end. The new lord mayor at short notice called a Court of Common Council to approve the proposal.

At last Wilkes and his followers bestirred themselves. The livery crowded into Common Hall, and the proposal was rejected by three or four to one. The scene was reminiscent of the days of 1768. The lord mayor was intimidated by the violence of his unpopularity, and even more by the proposal to inquire into his financial relations as a contractor with the City. The power of the White Hart association was broken, and the dominance of Wilkes revived.[1] From that time, the City returned to its former policy of steady opposition to the American war, and in 1779, on the death of Hopkins, Wilkes was at last elected City chamberlain by a large majority.

The tide seemed to have turned. News came from America that could not longer be presented as anything but disastrous. Burgoyne, the vanquished commander of Saratoga,

returned home, and was mercilessly cross-examined by Wilkes on his use of savage Indian troops.* The artificial prosperity of the war weakened, declined and disappeared; with it vanished the power of the contractors. The ranks of the government were visibly shaken: North himself was kept to his post only by personal pressure from the king. Lords Weymouth and Gower in 1779, ratlike, threw up their government posts to join the Opposition in good time. The official Whigs plucked up new courage, for the long period of royal autocracy was visibly near its end. Even the "country gentlemen" began to murmur. Sir George Savile, the energetic Yorkshire M.P. who had before now supported the popular cause, organized an association in his county which presented a vehement petition against the whole conduct of public business and especially against the illicit and clandestine waste of public money. This petition was endorsed by committees or associations in many other counties and boroughs. Its plea was translated into Parliamentary form by Burke in February, 1780, when he introduced five bills for an "œconomical reformation" which would have cut off some of the chief sources from which the king was able to corrupt Parliament. These proposals were not, as yet, carried, for the House of Commons wavered from one side to the other, but on April 6th, 1780, there was carried by 233 votes to 215 a far more drastic and famous motion, "that the influence of the crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished."

It was while this victory was fresh, and almost before the triumphant joy with which it was received had subsided, that events occurred which ended all Wilkes' ambitions and finished his career as a politician. Disaster came upon him in the flush

* Gates, the American commander, charged him with the "vindictive malice of a monk," adding that he had "mangled the blooming virgin."

of anticipated success; it sprang upon him as it were from the darkness; its engineers were the dullest and blindest of mankind and their leader was a lunatic.

The sudden outburst of popular rage in which Wilkes' prospects were destroyed, can best be understood if it is compared to a pogrom. In Russia, before the revolution, years of patient work by socialists and reformers would be undone in a few days in a wild orgy of religious bigotry, in which half a city might be looted and burnt, and a whole Jewish population made homeless or perhaps massacred. And these same reformers knew that they had indirectly and innocently some share in this murderous fury—that it was indeed in some way a Satanic parody of their own movement. They had denounced the system of capitalist and financial oppression; and the trader or financier whom the average Russian saw was very often a Jew. It needed only the suggestions of bigoted priests to turn aside the growing indignation of the poor towards the Jews as a race, and make it expend itself in massacre and loot. A similar fanatical misdirection now overcame the working classes who had so long supported Wilkes in his attack on arbitrary power. Were not the most slavish adherents of royal autocracy Roman Catholics? Had not the Quebec act legalized Roman Catholicism as part of an attack on the Americans? Were not Catholic armies being raised in Canada, Scotland and Ireland? Was it not well known that Catholics, being freed by the Pope from all usual moral obligations, had inserted themselves as the chief agents of tyranny in many of the highest places?

The passing of a Catholic relief bill in 1778—warmly supported by Wilkes, Savile and others—had been enough to set such rumors going. They had begun in Scotland, where vicious but little-considered riots followed against the Roman Cath-

olics. It was noted that the most murderous of many inflammatory publications was issued by a body called the Heritors of Carluke in Lanark, who sent the poison south by entering into correspondence with an obscure London Protestant association.

In London the new movement found its chief. The enmity of Lord George Gordon to the ministry arose from a complicated intrigue directed by Lord North. To North it was no more than one of the many intricate arrangements by which he kept Parliament in his hand. He arranged with the Duke of Gordon in 1778 to make Lord William Gordon Lord Admiral of Scotland; in return, the duke, as head of the Gordon family, was to make Lord George Gordon resign the pocket borough of Luggershall in favor of one of North's nominees. Lord George Gordon felt himself slighted, and in his weak mind the whole affair, together with the Quebec act, his own lack of promotion in the navy, the pamphlets of the Heritors of Carluke, and who knows what else, formed itself into a conspiracy against the Protestant religion.*

The storm burst with extreme suddenness and with hardly any warning on Friday, June 2nd, 1780. It was known that on that day Lord George Gordon, escorted by Protestant sympathizers, would present a petition to the House of Commons asking for the repeal of the Roman Catholic relief act. But very few anticipated the huge crowd that attended. It was not so great as the crowds which had escorted Wilkes, but it was far more vicious. It had usurped the Wilkite blue cockade, and blockaded the entrances of both the Lords and the Commons. No member who was not fortunate enough to

* For several points in this narrative I am indebted to two unpublished essays on *Catholic Relief* and *Lord George Gordon* by Mr. R. S. Lambert, to whom my thanks are due.

be within the House before about ten in the morning was allowed to enter without shouting "No popery!" and, if he was believed to be tolerant in politics, he was likely to be ill-treated as well. Several lords were kicked and hustled, bishops were thrown down, His Grace of Lincoln escaped only by fleeing into a private house, changing his clothes and climbing over the leads of the adjacent houses, and Lords Townshend and Hillsborough had their wigs torn off. Lord George Gordon during these scenes came frequently to the head of the gallery stairs, surveyed his supporters and encouraged them by anti-papal harangues. He denounced by name to them such members as he considered were betraying Protestantism "particularly Mr. Burke the member for Bristol." Other members of the House expostulated with him: "For God's sake, Lord George," said General Grant, one of his relatives, "do not lead these poor people into danger." Gordon's only answer was to turn to the crowd and say, "You see this effort to persuade me from my duty." The members of both Houses stood with swords drawn for hours, expecting to have to repel an armed invasion any moment. Eventually persuasion and a small force of soldiers dispersed the crowd from Old Palace Yard. They scattered, however, merely to pillage a number of Roman Catholic chapels; but the House of Commons, having rejected the petition, consoled itself with the thought that little real damage had been done, and that all was now over.

Saturday was quiet, but on Sunday the riot broke out again. The large Catholic district of Moorfields was gutted by Protestants. Chapels were stripped bare, as were private houses, and all the pews and other woodwork broken up, piled together and fired. No attempt was made to check them, and on Monday the work of devastation was systematically spread

to Smithfields and Wapping, and then sporadically all over London. The houses not only of Catholics but even of sympathizers were pillaged and burned, and among the sufferers was Sir George Savile. On Tuesday, five detachments swept the city with destruction. One, after a fierce battle, stormed and destroyed the huge fortress and prison of Newgate, another wrecked the whole Catholic quarter round Red Lion Square, another seized and wrecked the New prison, others wrecked and burned the houses of Mr. Justice Cox, Sir John Fielding and Lord Mansfield. Much of London was now blazing, and the City and national authorities were terrified and idle.

Wilkes as an alderman was partly responsible for the maintenance of order in the City, and had watched these events with considerable disquiet. Perhaps it may seem ridiculous to speak, in the case of such a man, of a conscientious doubt, but at least it may be agreed that he was in a position of great difficulty. Some of his old allies, such as Bull and Sawbridge, were among the chief assistants of Lord George. The leaders of the rioters, and indeed the rioters themselves, included many of his most enthusiastic supporters among the common people. He had said, with exaggeration rather than insincerity, that he believed the voice of the people to be the voice of God. This people, in whose loyalty to liberty he had trusted, was now engaged wholeheartedly in persecuting unhappy, homeless and terrified persons whose only crime was their religion. Some few of his other chief supporters, the merchants, were assisting, but for the most part they were cowering in terror, hoping only for a strong force to protect them.

Immediate popularity lay in joining or countenancing the rioters. Immediate safety lay in prudent inaction. But it

was already clear that such inaction would mean there would soon be little or nothing left of the City of London. Wilkes had but recently been defending religious toleration in Parliament; his house, if his words were at all sincere, was as worthy to be burnt down as Sir George Savile's.

Wilkes had noted till Tuesday the 6th the progress of the fire and destruction. On Wednesday, he took action. He called officially on the terrified and useless lord mayor and bullied him into promising to order the sheriffs to call out the *posse comitatus;* in waiting for this promise to be fulfilled, he set out himself with what armed force he could collect. The state of the City was such as could not be described. Destruction had been organized on a wider scale than ever before. The King's Bench Prison, the Fleet Prison, and indeed almost all others except the Tower and Wood Street prison, one by one went up in flames. Every house of a wealthy Catholic, every shop and every factory was carefully looted and then fired. At Langdale's Holborn distillery the vats were stove in and raw spirits flowed in streams down the gutters of the street. A wild struggle followed in the crowd to reach the liquor and almost at once drunken men and women were lying in heaps about the road. At the height of the orgy, the alcohol caught fire from the blazing house, and those who did not die in agony from drinking unrectified spirits, were burned in the sudden blaze.

Terrifying as the scene was by day, it became more alarming as night fell. "As soon as the day was drawing towards a close," observed the *Annual Register,* "one of the most dreadful spectacles this country has ever beheld was exhibited. Let those who were not spectators of it judge what the inhabitants felt when they beheld at the same instant the flames ascending and rolling in clouds from the King's Bench and

Fleet Prisons, from New Bridewell, from the tollgate on Blackfriars Bridge, from houses in every quarter of the town, and particularly from the bottom and middle of Holborn, where the conflagration was horrible beyond description. . . . Six and thirty fires, all blazing at one time, and in different quarters of the city, were to be seen from one spot." Men, women and children could be seen rushing to and fro endeavoring to rescue what goods they might from their burning homes, and all night there continued unceasing "the tremendous roar of the authors of these horrible scenes." There were already many hundreds of dead.

The great struggle this night was for the Bank of England. Here Wilkes had posted himself in defense, and the rioters attacked it in form, led by a youth on a horse. The tale of the conflict is given by Wilkes himself with almost military brevity in the diary which he kept for these few days. "Attack near the Bank between 11 and 12 at night; fired 6 or seven times on the rioters at the end of the Bank towards Austin Friars and towards the middle of the Bank. Killed two rioters directly opposite the great gate of the Bank, several others in Pig Street and Cheapside." It was the first serious check received by the rebels. Next day Wilkes was granted by the lord mayor an official draft for troops, and took the offensive against the rebels. By now, too, the government had been forced by its chief into action—for it was already being remarked that the only people who seemed not to have lost all their courage were the king and John Wilkes. By the 9th, the rioters were visibly losing ground; on the 10th Wilkes notes "dispersed a great mob in Fleet street at William Moore's, no. 159, seized several treasonable papers . . . issued a warrant against William Moore." By the 14th, all was over. Wilkes, in the course of his official duties that day, committed

Moore to prison, for printing "two seditious and treasonable papers," for rioting and destroying a house. He records merely the committal; he has no reflections on the fact that William Moore had once printed the *North Briton* and the house that was destroyed was Lord Mansfield's.[2]

When the madness was over, it left the parks full of refugees and half of London charred and smoldering. But the greatest of all its destructions was the ruin of Wilkes' power and the whole Wilkite movement. The two political horses which he drove had parted company. The merchants were not for many months likely to take up popular agitation again. The people, who had been Wilkes' chief support, cared nothing for religious scruples; they knew only that he had shot down Wilkites in defense of Lord Mansfield and in the name of the king.

Wilkes himself appears to have realized that his career was at an end. From this moment he abandoned almost every form of political agitation. He who had been the most active of all politicians, suddenly became wholly inert. Up till this minute he had been as energetic as before—visiting places like Great Marlow to encourage Wilkite principles, attacking the American war in Parliament, taking as an observation post a seat on the Westminster committee for "œconomical reformation"—but from now on all these occupations ended. He rarely spoke in Parliament, never in the country, abandoned his interest in reform and even in City politics. No man was ever self-extinguished so completely and so suddenly. He did not betray his principles; he merely ceased to do anything whatever. The cynicism which he had so often put on, seemed now to have become a real creed.

It is perhaps too strong a phrase to say that he did nothing whatever. There were some small matters that required his

attention for fitness and symmetry's sake. The bulk of his work had been done, but he still could spare the time to finish it off neatly. He wished, for completeness' sake, that the record of his expulsion should be removed by the House of Commons, as a confession of error. He moved motions regularly to this end, but in this subject alone did he show interest. If others proposed the reform of Parliament or peace with America he would vote in favor, if he were in the House and happened to remember, but for himself he would initiate nothing. He had destroyed general warrants, secured the liberty of the press and vindicated rights of the electors against Parliament. This was his task and it was finished; others might proceed further if they wished.

The extinction he desired was made easier by the rapid growth of the new and moderate reform movement initiated by Sir George Savile. The "committee of association of the county of York," which in some sense directed the movement, at first treated the Wilkites with great circumspection. In its address of 1781, which was enthusiastically adopted in many other counties, it recounted once more Wilkes' case and based on it, in part, the demand for reform. It discussed the reason for the slow progress of reform and decided that it was due to two facts—the first, that the opinions of Members of Parliament were not so advanced as those of the writers; the second, that there was a difference of opinion, some favoring annual Parliaments and universal suffrage, and some triennial Parliaments and the addition of a hundred new members to Parliament, representing the counties and London. Yorkshire (it continued) was firmly in favor of the more advanced plan, but in view of the prejudices that existed, proposed for a while the adoption of "the more limited plan."[3] No Wilkite raised a word of protest. Votes of adherence poured

in from the counties, wiping out the last traces of the work that Glynn—dead since 1779—and Wilkes had done a dozen years before. Essex, Somerset, Surrey, Devon, Buckinghamshire, Huntingdon, Gloucestershire, Bedfordshire, Kent, Dorset, Hertford, Berkshire, Cheshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Hampshire and even Middlesex responded. Wilkes made no sign of disagreement; the new reformers realized there would be no attack from the Left, and went forward without further considering him.

In 1782, occurred an event which would once have been the culmination of his desires, and even now stirred in him a faint interest. News came of the crushing of the British forces in America at Yorktown; the House of Commons revolted; North flung up his office in despair. The king, his hopes of autocracy defeated, sent unwillingly for Rockingham, who brought with him Shelburne, Fox, Burke and other prominent opponents. Acts for "œconomical reformation" were passed, which cut away some of the chief means of royal corruption. Wilkes presented his congratulations to the new ministry and hastened to move the only motion in which he was still interested—"That the Resolution of the 17th day of February, 1769, [for his expulsion] be expunged from the Journals of this House, as being subversive of the Rights of the whole body of Electors of this Kingdom" and on May 3rd, 1782, "it was resolved in the Affirmative" by a majority of 68.

Now his career was finished and he retired into the position of an observer. Had he been tempted to revive old illusions of the honesty of Whigs and truth of Whiggism, events occurred which would rapidly have undeceived him. Rockingham shortly afterwards died, and there followed an undignified and complicated period of intrigue among the Whig leaders for power, ending in 1783 with a monstrous

coalition of Fox, at the head of the most vocal section of Whigs, with North himself, the Tory and king's instrument. Not Wilkes alone, but the whole country was shocked, and echoed the indignant protest of William Pitt, the younger, the son of the now dead Earl of Chatham.

Encouraged by the general detestation, the king took advantage of the defeat of the government's East India bill in the Lords—a defeat he had himself engineered—to force Fox and North to resign. He called upon the young Pitt to be the new Prime Minister, little realizing that he was taking a master rather than a new servant. Pitt was known to be a reformer, had already moved and shortly was to move again, bills for the reform of Parliament. His political program fitted in well enough with Wilkes', who saw in him, with a kindly sentimentality, a reincarnation of the elder Pitt as he had known and admired him thirty years before. The faintness of the division between Whig and Tory had long been clear to Wilkes, Fox was his personal enemy, and he saw no reason why he should not transfer formally his support to the new Minister. This he did, and at the election of 1784, in which Pitt secured a triumphant majority, Wilkes accepted as colleague for Middlesex a "kind friend," Mainwaring. But before he would do this, Mainwaring had to issue an address accepting the Wilkite theories of Parliamentary reform and the responsibility of M.P.'s.

Support of Pitt meant support of the government, support of government meant a cessation of attacks on the king. Before many years had passed, the strange sight was seen of Wilkes, among other government supporters, at the king's levees, and on occasion the two old gentlemen exchanged a civil word. The official Whigs did not conceal their indignation. They could not point to anything that Wilkes had

done which contravened his public program and principles.[4] But there was ample room for indirect attack. The Prince of Wales, the chief of all Whigs and Wilkes' *bête noire,* turned to him one evening and quoted Sheridan's verse—

> Johnny Wilkes, Johnny Wilkes,
> You greatest of bilks,
> How changed are the notes you now sing!
> For your dear Forty-five
> Is prerogative
> And your blasphemy God save the King.[5]

Wilkes had his revenge one night at Carlton House when the prince called for toasts. He gave—"The king—long life to him." The prince, who detested his father and rejoiced in his illness, resented the words. "Since when have you been so anxious over my parent's health?" he said. "Since I had the pleasure of your royal highness's acquaintance," answered Wilkes with a bow.

XV

An Extinct Volcano

FROM the time of the Gordon riots to the date of Wilkes' death is seventeen years, and those seventeen years are among the most important of British history. But there is scarcely anything to record in Wilkes' life in those years. He remained obstinately indifferent to public affairs; to those who endeavored to rouse his enthusiasm for any cause he replied indulgently, "I am an extinct volcano." He retained his membership of the House of Commons, as one of the most interesting places in London to an intelligent man; and of course it was not possible for a man to be a member and never at all be tempted into some intervention in debate. When Burke and Sheridan began their famous attack on Warren Hastings, Wilkes, true to his old policy on Indian affairs, delivered an eloquent defense of the ex-governor;[1] but as soon as it appeared there was to be a long and tedious struggle he abandoned the subject. His caustic comments on political affairs were generally personal. One delighted the great audience that crowded the galleries of the House of Lords in 1788, on the occasion of the debates on the regency bill necessitated by the madness of George III. Pitt's colleagues were already preparing to pass over to the opposition and pay their court to the Prince of Wales. Lord Chancellor Thurlow, notoriously the chief intriguer, delivered a speech which ended dishonestly and melodramatically—"And when I forget my sovereign, may my God forget me!" "God forget you?" said

Wilkes, "He'll see you damned first." Two other characteristic comments were heard—Burke's "Forget you? The best thing that could happen to you"; Pitt's "Oh! the rascal!" [2] When the French Revolution broke out, he greeted it with complete non-comprehension. So far as he had any interest in it at all, the queen appeared to him a romantic and pathetic figure, and the bloodier scenes of the revolution merely upset him. He never reflected that just as the American Revolution arose directly from the agitation for Wilkes and liberty, so the French Revolution was the child of the American, and the principles that lay behind it were those that had guided his political life. He did not extend to the French the tolerance he kept for the London workers. When in 1794 a mob broke his windows in mistake for another's, he refused to prosecute: "They are only some of my old pupils," he said, "now set up for themselves."

He had purchased for himself a small home, which he called his "villakin," at Sandown in the Isle of Wight. He divided his time between this and London, where he attended punctiliously to his duties as chamberlain. Once, on his journey, an old woman startled him with the cry "Wilkes and Liberty!" "Be quiet, you old fool," he replied surprisedly, "that's all over long ago." [3] At another time, as he stood in conversation with a friend in the street, a soldier pointed him out to his son—"That's Johnny Wilkes, and that bald head has more brains in it than all our regiment put together, drummers and all."

"Jack has great variety of talk, Jack is a scholar, Jack has the manners of a gentleman," Dr. Johnson had said once, and we may believe that it was the verdict which Wilkes would secretly most have desired. His leisure was occupied with pursuits which would show him to be a scholar and a gentle-

man. In 1788 he published an edition of Catullus which was greeted with widespread praise. "Mr. Wilkes' *Catullus* is immaculate," states Almon. "Not a word is misspelt, misplaced or omitted." His choice of an author was felt to be eccentric: to admire Catullus was not the fashion of the eighteenth century. Friends cast round for an explanation—"it can scarcely be supposed that the merit of Catullus was sufficient to gain the high esteem of Mr. Wilkes' admired talents and improved taste" [4]—and they found it in an imagined similarity in the tempestuous careers of the two men. In 1790 Wilkes published the first complete edition of the *Characters* of Theophrastus. This, though in reality a more meritorious performance, received less praise. "It is like its editor—of no character," said the great Porson. The reason for the coldness was Wilkes' omission of all accents and breathings from the text, which classical scholars resented, not wholly with reason.*

His duties as chamberlain were light, and of a kind to please him. "Functions" and ceremonial always pleased him, and he performed with dignity the task of delivering the formal address to those presented with the freedom of the city. He revived for this purpose the formal salutation *"I give you joy,"* with which he always began his address. As chamberlain, he had also the task of hearing cases concerning

*Wilkes' action can be defended only in part. The omission of the rough breathing in Greek seems indubitably an error. But the accents are another matter. They are not classical but Alexandrine in date, and they were invented in an endeavor to indicate the correct classical pronunciation to the barbarous peoples then learning Greek. The English pronunciation of Greek is no doubt semi-barbarous, but the accents are no guide to us. They appear to represent pitch and not stress accents, and any endeavor of an English speaker to observe them in pronunciation entirely destroys the meter of Greek verse. Those who have heard this attempted will be inclined to agree that the accents printed in our texts to-day are a useless encumbrance. Nor is any more effective regard paid to them in France and Germany.

apprentices. His guiding principle in deciding the cases which came before him seems to have been similar to that which directed him earlier—to hold a balance between the employer or journeyman and the apprentice. Apprentices who broke the terms of their indenture, or refused to work beyond customary hours when required were rebuked by him; masters who beat or ill-treated their apprentices were equally reprimanded.[5]

His salary and perquisites made him wealthy and his daughter Polly was rich under her mother's will. The natural consequence was that dependents of every kind quartered themselves on his bounty. His elder brother Israel reappeared penniless and had to be started on a fresh career. Heaton Wilkes, now in the coal business, was perennially insolvent and continually rescued by his brother from bankruptcy. All had large families, and assistance had to be on a corresponding scale. Charles Churchill's bastard, a worthless boy, lived off him[6] and among his letters we notice the grateful acknowledgment of Charlotte Forman, a distressed *old* lady. His own bastards also required his attention. Harriet, the daughter of Mrs. Arnold of Bath, for whom he had a gentle and steady affection which lasted all the evening of his life, eventually married a rising young lawyer, William Rough. Jack Smith, the son of one of his housekeepers, was more of a problem. Expensively educated, he showed every sign of becoming a good-for-nothing. He had been sent to Harrow and then enlisted in the Hessian cavalry, with the proviso that he should never serve against the Americans. Now he lost or threw up his commission there, and Wilkes found for him a good place in the East India Company, and from India this "nephew" wrote at decent but regular intervals asking for more money.[7]

He acquired new friends and reconciled himself with his old enemies. If he could joke with George III, there was no reason why he should not meet Lord Mansfield. He sent the judge a complimentary copy of his *Theophrastus* and received a courteous acknowledgment. He had a formal meeting and reconciliation with James Townsend, and the house where the two met was Lord Shelburne's. He never indeed was friends again with Horne, but at least he went on to the hustings and voted publicly for him at Westminster against Fox. He had already been reconciled with his most famous opponent. It was Boswell who formed the whimsical project of staging a meeting between Wilkes and Dr. Johnson. He arranged with a common friend, the publisher Mr. Edward Dilly, to invite both Wilkes and Johnson, and made himself the bearer of the latter invitation. "Notwithstanding," he writes, "the high veneration which I entertained for Dr. Johnson, I was sensible that he was sometimes a little actuated by the spirit of contradiction, and by means of that I hoped I should gain my point. I was persuaded that if I had come upon him with a direct proposal, 'Sir, will you dine in company with Jack Wilkes?' he would have flown into a passion, and would probably have answered, 'Dine with Jack Wilkes, Sir! I'd as soon dine with Jack Ketch.' I therefore, while we were sitting quietly by ourselves at his house in an evening, took occasion to open my plan thus:—'Mr. Dilly, Sir, sends his respectful compliments to you, and would be happy if you would do him the honour to dine with him on Wednesday next along with me, as I must soon go to Scotland. *Johnson.* 'Sir, I am obliged to Mr. Dilly. I will wait upon him.' *Boswell.* 'Provided, Sir, I suppose, that the company which he is to have is agreeable to you.' *Johnson.* 'What do you mean, Sir? What do you take me for? Do you think I am so ignorant of

the world, as to imagine that I am to prescribe to a gentleman what company he is to have at his table?' *Boswell.* 'I beg your pardon, Sir, for wishing to prevent you from meeting people whom you might not like. Perhaps he may have some of what he calls his patriotick friends with him.' *Johnson.* 'Well, Sir, and what then? What care *I* for his *patriotick friends?* Poh!' *Boswell.* 'I should not be surprised to find Jack Wilkes there.' *Johnson.* 'And if Jack Wilkes *should* be there, what is that to *me,* Sir? My dear friend, let us have no more of this. I am sorry to be angry with you; but really it is treating me strangely to talk to me as if I could not meet any company whatever, occasionally.' *Boswell.* 'Pray, forgive me, Sir: I meant well. But you shall meet whoever comes, for me.' Thus I secured him, and told Dilly that he would find him very well pleased to be one of his guests on the day appointed."

The arrangement nearly fell through, but eventually Dr. Johnson kept the appointment.

"When we entered Mr. Dilly's drawing-room, he found himself in the midst of a company he did not know. I kept myself snug and silent, watching how he would conduct himself. I observed him whispering to Mr. Dilly, 'Who is that gentleman, Sir?'—'Mr. Arthur Lee.'—*Johnson.* 'Too, too, too,' (under his breath,) which was one of his habitual mutterings. Mr. Arthur Lee could not but be very obnoxious to Johnson, for he was not only a *patriot,* but an *American.* He was afterwards minister from the United States at the court of Madrid. 'And who is the gentleman in lace?'—'Mr. Wilkes, Sir.' This information confounded him still more; he had some difficulty to restrain himself, and taking up a book, sat down upon a window-seat and read, or at least kept his eye upon it intently for some time, till he composed himself. His

feelings, I dare say, were awkward enough. But he no doubt recollected his having rated me for supposing that he could be at all disconcerted by any company, and he, therefore, resolutely set himself to behave quite as an easy man of the world, who could adapt himself at once to the disposition and manners of whose whom he might chance to meet.

"The cheering sound of 'Dinner is upon the table' dissolved his reverie, and we *all* sat down without any symptom of ill humour. There were present, beside Mr. Wilkes, and Mr. Arthur Lee, who was an old companion of mine when he studied physik at Edinburgh, Mr. (now Sir John) Miller, Dr. Lettsom, and Mr. Slater, the druggist. Mr. Wilkes placed himself next to Dr. Johnson, and behaved to him with so much attention and politeness, that he gained upon him insensibly. No man eat more heartily than Johnson, or loved better what was nice and delicate. Mr. Wilkes was very assiduous in helping him to some fine veal. 'Pray give me leave, Sir;—It is better here—A little of the brown—Some fat, Sir—A little of the stuffing—Some gravy—Let me have the pleasure of giving you some butter—Allow me to recommend a squeeze of this orange;—or the lemon, perhaps, may have more zest.'—'Sir, Sir, I am obliged to you, Sir,' cried Johnson, bowing, and turning his head to him with a look for some time of 'surly virtue,' but in a short while, of complacency."

From that moment on the two antagonists conversed cordially and animatedly the whole evening, and when any dangerous subject arose they were both content to turn it aside by exchanging jokes at the expense of the Scotch.

Wilkes grew old very peaceably. There were few troubles to annoy him. A Scottish common councilman was a permanent critic of him as chamberlain, but even national rancor failed to find any flaw in his accounts. His daughter Polly,

now a grown woman, had inherited so much of her father's plainness that all her wealth brought her no acceptable suitor. She remained her father's companion, and their letters are a record of deep affection and domestic placidity which go strangely with the name of Wilkes. But though he lived a life of quiet respectability with her in Sandown or London, away from her his life went on as before. Overdrinking and overeating were never his failings, but his devotion to the third primary physical pleasure remained undiminished, and the list of his mistresses lengthened almost every year. The decline of his life was occupied with the same amusement as his youth and middle age. It was this period of his life that vindicated his boast that with any woman he asked only half an hour's start and he would back himself against the handsomest man in Europe. His lady-loves have been listed and described,[8] but only one of them—the only one who can by no stretch be described as a woman of the town—is of interest to us to-day. His affair with Maria Stafford was of early date—1778—when he was still an active democrat, and he appealed to her political as well as her natural passions. Her husband had deserted her, he himself was saddled with an unlovable wife whom he could not divorce. He offered her, in words that ring true but which she was perhaps well advised not to trust, a permanent position equivalent to that of a wife. She kept him dangling for months, saying *No* in such a fashion as to suggest *Yes,* and weakening gradually so that he may well have thought success approaching. The affair was suddenly and finally ended, though he still "continued to sigh," by the intervention of a firm-minded female friend of Mrs. Stafford, who perceived a present from Wilkes lying upon her table. She cross-questioned the wavering woman, extracted from her the whole story, lectured her till she trembled, dictated to her and made

her sign a letter for ever warning Wilkes away from the house.[9] Shortly afterwards Mrs. Stafford was reconciled to her husband, who was a Wilkite, and thereafter she frequently met her admirer, to whom she allowed a considerable freedom of flirtation within prescribed limits.

Age made but few changes in his appearance—a little more bent, a little thinner, a little more wizened perhaps, but still he was essentially the same grotesque and grinning Wilkes in red coat and heavily powdered wig. In 1794 he made a will dispensing various legacies as if he were a rich man—it is typical of him that when he died he was found to be not quite solvent. One of the last of the functions that he attended was on November the 28th, 1797, when he had to present the freedom of the city to a rising and popular admiral, Sir Horatio Nelson, the victor of Cape St. Vincent. He seemed very old, even for his seventy years; his first words, "I give you joy!" rang clear, but his strength would not last and his speech to the admiral consisted of a very few sentences. A week later a cold that he had caught turned to a chill. His body was now too exhausted to resist the least attack, he sank steadily and slowly, without pain and conscious to the last. On Tuesday, December 26th, 1797, he died peacefully and contentedly, his last words being an affectionate phrase to his daughter.

They engraved upon the plate of his coffin the epitaph and verdict he had chosen for himself: "The remains of John Wilkes, a Friend to Liberty."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

SOURCES FOR THE LIFE OF JOHN WILKES

THE chief material for the life of John Wilkes is the great mass of his papers which are preserved in the British Museum in some twenty-five volumes—Add. Ms. 30865 onwards, and some few other scattered papers. Most of the volumes consist of letters to and from Wilkes; the following deserve special notice: Add. Ms. 30866 consists of his diary, which gives almost exclusively notes of his dinner engagements. At the end are his notes on the Gordon riots. Add. Ms. 30887 is a fake *Essay on Woman*. Add. Ms. 30895 consists chiefly of press cuttings and pamphlets about the Yorkshire reform movement of 1781. Add. Mss. 30865A and 30865B consist of fragments—no doubt rough drafts—of his autobiography. His completed life of himself was burnt by Polly after his death. These two fragments were edited and privately printed in 1888 at Harrow by F. des Habits. What remains of Churchill's letters are in Add. Ms. 30878; Philipps' letters are in Add. Ms. 30886; Add. Ms. 30888 is Kensingtoniana, a draft miscellaneous book by Wilkes.

Also in the British Museum, but not issued for general reading, are copies of the true (P. C. 31 k 7) and the false *Essay on Woman* (P. C. 31 f 30).

The next most important collection is at the Guildhall. In four Ms. volumes here are all the papers of the crown solicitor in the *North Briton* and *Essay* cases. These include (1) Wilkes' seized papers, (2) depositions, briefs, indictments and draft evidence, (3) official correspondence of a

very illuminating and, as in Kidgell's case, scandalizing character. The records of Wilkes' shrievalty and mayoralty are to be found in the usual Ms. journals of city proceedings, in this case JOR 66 and 179 REP. Further collections (printed) in the Guildhall worth mentioning are a *Collection* dealing with City elections, a *Collection* of petitions and addresses (1778), and one of the acts of common council (1790).

Other Ms. records of Wilkes are in the W. L. Clements library at Ann Arbor, Michigan, U. S. A., and in Mr. Clements' own library. I have inspected a catalogue of these, but they do not appear to include anything of importance that has not been published. Several private collections also contain stray letters of Wilkes.

Two printed collections of letters contain a high proportion of the valuable material in the above libraries. The larger and more important is J. Almon's *Letters of John Wilkes* (1805, 5 vols.). The second is anonymously edited, but in fact edited by Sir W. Rough, who contributes a brilliant short sketch of his father-in-law's career. It consists almost wholly of letters to Polly (4. vols., 1804). Other original documents are to be found in *The Authentick Account of the Proceedings against John Wilkes* (1763), *A Collection of Pieces relative to the Inhuman Massacre in St. George's Fields* (1769), *Controversial Letters of John Wilkes and Horne* (1771), *The Wilkes Jest Book* (1770), and above all in a great repository of miscellaneous material called *English Liberty* (1768, 1770). The *Annual Register* from 1763 to 1787 should also be consulted, especially the sections "State Papers" "Chronicle" and "History"—the last named being probably by Edmund Burke.

Wilkes' own publications are: *The Speeches of Mr. Wilkes* (1786), The *North Briton, A Letter to the Right Hon.*

George Grenville M.P. (1769) and other *Letters* to be found most conveniently in *English Liberty.*

Some of the most fruitful sources of information are publications not dealing directly, or exclusively, with Wilkes. Of these the most important is the *Grenville Correspondence,* containing Temple's correspondence. Next are Horace Walpole's *Letters* (which are here cited from the edition of 1820 except when otherwise noted) and his *Memoirs of the Reign of George III.* See also: R. Gibbs' *Worthies of Buckinghamshire* (1886); *Victoria County History;* "Bucks," Sanford and Townsend, *The Great Governing Families of England; "Chrysal" or the Adventures of a Guinea* by C. Johnson; C. Dilke, *Papers of a Critic,* Vol. II; E. R. Watson's contributions on Wilkes in *Notes and Queries,* Vol. XI; *The New Foundling Hospital for Wit,* and the standard biographies, histories, and economic studies of the eighteenth century, especially Mrs. M. D. George's *London in the XVIIIth Century.*

Other sources are indicated in their proper place in the notes to this book.

Of the modern studies of John Wilkes, incomparably the best is H. W. Bleackley's *Life of John Wilkes* (1917). Other studies which from time to time give useful information are: Sir W. P. Treloar, *Wilkes and the City* (1917); P. Fitzgerald, *Life of John Wilkes* (1888); W. F. Rae, *Wilkes, Sheridan, Fox* (1874); W. Gregory, *John Wilkes* (1888); A. M. Broadley, *Brother John Wilkes;* E. Green, *John Wilkes and his visits to Bath* (1903) and *Some Bath Love Letters of John Wilkes* (1918); and W. S. Shirley, *John Wilkes.* The five last-named are very brief.

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[1] See H. W. Bleackley's *Life of Wilkes,* Appendix II.
[2] Almon, *Letters of John Wilkes,* I, 22.
[3] A. M. Broadley, *Brother John Wilkes.*
[4] R. Gibbs, *Worthies of Bucks, s. v.* "Potter."
[5] Sanford and Townsend, *Great Governing Families of England,* II, 10.
[6] Walpole, *Letters,* III, 336-7 (1820 edition).
[7] Guildhall Mss. on Wilkes, Vol. I.
[8] *Grenville Correspondence,* Oct. 15, 1756.
[9] W. F. Rae, *Wilkes, Sheridan, Fox,* p. 10, citing *Reminiscences of Charles Butler,* I, 144.
[10] Almon, *Letters of John Wilkes,* I, 26.

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[1] Sanford and Townsend, *Great Governing Families of England,* II, 10, *sq.*
[2] *Letters,* Toynbee edition, V, 128, *sq.*
[3] D. A. Winstanley, *Personal and Party Government,* p. 110.
[4] Almon, *Letters,* I, 57, 63.
[5] *English Liberty,* p. 16.
[6] *Ibid.,* p. 1.

CHAPTER III

[1] Add. Ms. 30866, p. 65.
[2] Almon, *Letters,* II, 55.
[3] Add. Ms. 30866.
[4] Lewis Melville, *The Star of Piccadilly,* p. 25.
[5] Rough's *Letters,* I, 15.
[6] R. Gibbs, *Worthies of Bucks, s. v.* "Dashwood."
[7] Wilkes' notes on Churchill's works in Almon's *Letters,* III, 57.
[8] *New Foundling Hospital for Wit,* I, 46.
[9] *Ibid.,* I, 46.

[10] *Ibid.,* I, 129.

[11] W. F. Rae, *Wilkes, Sheridan, Fox,* p. 12; Walpole, *Memoirs,* I, 172.

[12] W. F. Rae, *Wilkes, Sheridan, Fox,* p. 13; C. Johnstone, *Chrysal,* III, 240.

[13] Add. Ms. 30878, p. 20. What remain of Churchill's letters to Wilkes are in that volume. A prefatory note to the beginning of the first volume of letters suggests some may have been destroyed. There are also a few letters prefixed to Tooke's 1804 edition of Churchill's poems.

[14] *Papers of a Critic,* II, 245.

[15] June 26. The paper was a weekly.

[16] July 17.

[17] *English Liberty,* II, 377, July 13th, 1762.

[18] *Memoirs of the Reign of George III,* I, 144.

[19] *Grenville Correspondence,* I, June 14th, 1762.

[20] Walpole, *Memoirs of the Reign of George III,* I, 140.

[21] *Grenville Correspondence,* I, June 27th.

[22] *North Briton,* No. 24 (Nov. 13th).

[23] *Ibid.,* No. 28 (Dec. 11th).

[24] *Ibid.,* No. 39 (Feb. 26, 1763).

[25] Dec. 25th. The last number of the *Auditor* was dated Feb. 12th.

[26] H. W. Bleackley, *John Wilkes,* p. 38.

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] Sept. 29, 1762.

[29] *Grenville Correspondence,* II, Nov. 23rd, 1762.

[30] *English Liberty,* II, 376.

[31] Add. Ms. 30866, 25/5/62.

[32] By Mr. Bleackley in his *John Wilkes,* ch. viii.

[33] Walpole, *Memoirs of the Reign of George III,* I, 248.

[34] Vol. I.

[35] *Letters,* II, 290.

[36] *Grenville Correspondence,* 12/10/62.

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] In the unfinished series of Wilkes' *Letters* published in 1769 is one dated March 23rd, from H. B. Legge, the famous financial authority, explaining to Wilkes certain principles of finance and dissociating the writer wholly from the new loan.

[39] *North Briton,* March 5th, 1763.

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[1] A copy of his impeachment will be found attached to the copy of Number 45 in the Guildhall library, E. 2.2.
[2] D. A. Winstanley, *Personal and Party Government,* p. 161.
[3] Rough's *Letters,* I, 29, 30.
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[5] H. W. Bleackley, *Wilkes,* p. 97.
[6] For all this see *The Whole Account of John Wilkes* (anonymously printed by J. Miller, 1768), containing Wilkes' letter to the Duke of Grafton.
[7] Given with a caution by Lord Royston in a letter quoted in Treloar's *Wilkes and the City,* p. 15.
[8] Some of these papers are now in the Guildhall collection, which consists of the Crown Solicitor's papers. Those signed "Blackmore" and "Watson" are those taken in Wilkes' presence.
[9] H. Walpole, *Memoirs of the Reign of George III,* I, 219.
[10] It is still among Wilkes' confiscated papers. Guildhall Mss., Vol. III.
[11] *Great Governing Families,* I, 349.
[12] *Grenville Correspondence,* II, May 3rd, 1783.
[13] *English Liberty,* p. 86.
[14] *Ibid.,* p. 87.
[15] Add. Ms. 30844.
[16] *Authentic Account,* p. 27.
[17] D. A. Winstanley, *Personal and Party Government,* p. 162.
[18] Add. Ms. 30866.
[19] Almon, *Letters,* I, 131.
[20] *Ibid.,* III, 119.
[21] P. Fitzgerald, *Wilkes,* I, 270.
[22] *Grenville Correspondence,* Vol. II.
[23] Guildhall Mss., Vol. I.
[24] *Grenville Correspondence,* II, June 11.
[25] *Ibid.,* various dates.
[26] *Ibid.,* II, August 26.
[27] *A Letter on the Seizure of Papers.*
[28] *Grenville Correspondence,* II, September 28th and October 18th.

[29] *Ibid.,* II, August 2nd.
[30] Add. Ms. 30887.
[31] Almon, *Letters,* I, 139.
[32] D. A. Winstanley, *Personal and Party Government,* p. 168.
[33] Almon, *Letters,* II, 56. Wilkes wished to publish it but was dissuaded.
[34] Guildhall Mss., Vol. III.
[35] Dilke, *Papers of a Critic,* II, 239.
[36] Guildhall Mss., Vol. I.
[37] *Ibid.,* Vols. II and IV.
[38] See especially Guildhall Mss., Vols. III-IV.
[39] There are also other, unsigned, letters.
[40] Add. Ms. 30869, fol. 37, and letter of January 29th.
[41] See Add. Ms. 30887, and Dilke, *Papers of a Critic,* II, 267.
[42] E. R. Watson in *Notes and Queries,* II, ix, 209.
[43] Guildhall Mss., Vol. IV.
[44] Almon, *Letters,* III, 113.
[45] In the Guildhall Mss.
[46] The controversy will be found in full in the Appendix to Bleackley's *Wilkes,* Dilke's *Papers of a Critic,* Vol. II, and E. R. Watson's articles in *Notes and Queries,* II, ix.
[47] Add. Ms. 30880 B.
[48] Add. Ms. 30886.
[49] Guildhall Mss., Vol. IV.
[50] *Ibid.,* Vol. III.

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[1] See Wilkes, *A Letter to George Grenville.*
[2] *Grenville Correspondence,* Vol. III, November 16th, 1863.
[3] See W. Gregory, *John Wilkes* (Bath, 1888), p. 91, and Almon, *Letters,* III, 81.
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[5] *Memoirs of the Reign of George III,* I, 253.
[6] Cf. E. R. Watson in *Notes and Queries,* II, ix, 144.
[7] By Charles Dilke, *Papers of a Critic,* II, 251.
[8] Rough's *Letters,* I, 42.
[9] *English Liberty,* p. 112.
[10] Add. Ms. 30868, January 17th, 1764.
[11] Almon, *Letters,* II, 43.
[12] Walpole, *Memoirs of the Reign of George III,* I, 262.

[13] Dilke, *Papers of a Critic,* II, 245.
[14] Almon, *Letters,* III, 97.
[15] *English Liberty,* p. 369.
[16] *Annual Register,* p. 50.
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[24] See also Almon's *Letters,* II, 74.
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[30] See note to Wilkes' speech of April 16th, 1777, in the *Speeches of Mr. Wilkes.*
[31] *Grenville Correspondence,* Vol. III, August 14th, 1764.
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CHAPTER VI

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[2] Almon's *Letters,* II, 100.
[3] For all this see Wilkes' *Autobiography,* Add. Ms. 30865 B.
[4] Almon's *Letters,* Vol. II.
[5] *Ibid.,* pp. 197, *sqq.*
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[7] Add. Ms. 30888 (Wilkes' Kensingtoniana).
[8] Walpole, *Memoirs of the Reign of King George III,* III, 197.

[9] Almon, *Letters,* II, 204.
[10] Treloar, *Wilkes and the City,* p. 43.
[11] Add. Ms. 30868, December 4th, 1765.
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[13] *Ibid.*
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[18] Almon, *Letters,* III, 179, *sqq.*
[19] *Grenville Correspondence,* Vol. IV, letters of February 2nd, and May 11th, 1767.
[20] Add. Ms. 30869.
[21] See his introduction to his edition of the *Letters,* I, 105.
[22] Gibbon's *Journal,* Low edition, p. 145.
[23] Letter of October 16th, 1765.
[24] Walpole's *Memoirs of the Reign of George III,* III, 138.
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[1] Baretti, *A Journey from London to Genoa.*
[2] *Covent Garden Journal,* No. 49.
[3] Ms., *Proceedings of Common Council,* 179, Rep., p. 348, *sqq.*
[4] By Mrs. M. D. George in her *London in the XVIIIth Century,* a valuable book upon which much of the above conclusion is based.
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[8] Whately's letter to George Grenville, *Grenville Correspondence,* Vol. IV, April 18th.
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[14] Walpole, *Letters* II, 397.
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[16] *Annual Register*, 1768, p. 86.
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] Walpole, *Memoirs of the Reign of George III*, III, 126, *sqq.*
[19] Franklin's *Memoirs*, II, 162.
[20] H. W. Bleackley, *John Wilkes*, p. 195.
[21] *Annual Register*, 1768, pp. 93-95.
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[26] *Memoirs of the Reign of George III*, III, 151.
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[2] Rough's *Letters*, I, 86, *sqq.*
[3] *English Liberty*, II, 230.
[4] *Ibid.*, II, 386.
[5] Fitzgerald, *Wilkes*, II, 63.
[6] *English Liberty*, II, 240.
[7] Treloar, p. 73.
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[9] Walpole's *Letters*, Toynbee edition, VII, 251.
[10] Walpole's *Letters*, II, 253.
[11] *English Liberty*, II, 287.
[12] Wilkes, *A Letter to George Grenville*, p. 40.
[13] *Letters*, II, 253.
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[15] *English Liberty*, II, 219.
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[17] The controversial literature is considerable: the fullest summary is *A Fair Trial* (anonymous, really by J. Mackintosh, but falsely ascribed to Lord Camden, Wilkite).
[18] Number 20.
[19] *Controversial Letters of Wilkes and Horne*, p. 150.
[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 160, 177.
[21] Almon's *Letters*, III, 8, B; *Annual Register*, 1770, p. 80.

[22] H. W. Bleackley, *Wilkes,* p. 220.
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[7] Add. Ms. 30871.
[8] Walpole, *Memoirs,* III, 227.
[9] See Plate 13 in Treloar's *Wilkes and the City.*
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[11] *Ibid.*
[12] *Annual Register,* 1770, pp. 51, 58.
[13] *Ibid.,* 1769, pp. 109, 117, 129, 131, 151, 153, 159, 192, *sqq.; Ibid.,* 1770, 200, *sqq.*
[14] Almon, *Letters,* III, 81, 102; Walpole, *Memoirs,* IV, 79; *Annual Register,* 1770, pp. 56, 58.
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[18] Walpole, *Memoirs of the Reign of King George III,* III, 238.
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[23] Walpole, *Memoirs of the Reign of George III,* III, 140.
[24] *Annual Register,* 1769, p. 150.
[25] *Ibid.,* 1770, p. 92.
[26] Cf. J. R. Green, *Short History of the English People* (1921 ed.), p. 777; "George III" in *Encyclopædia Britannica* (14th Edition, by Basil Williams).

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[2] *Letters of Wilkes,* p. 107.

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[7] Add. Ms. 30870, October, 1768.

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[11] *Annual Register,* 1771, pp. 66, 68, 70.

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[5] *Ibid.*

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[7] See for what follows the *Controversial Letters of Wilkes and Horne.*

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[9] *Annual Register,* 1771, p. 94.

[10] *Ibid.,* p. 121.

[11] Add. Ms. 30866; Bleackley, *Wilkes,* pp. 273, 411; Treloar, *Wilkes and the City,* p. 125, *sqq.; Annual Register,* 1771, p. 142.

[12] *Annual Register,* 1773.

[13] Campbell, *Lives of the Lord Chancellors,* VI, 68.

[14] *London: City Petitions, Addresses, etc.* (1778, Guildhall Library, A 81).

[15] Walpole, *Letters,* III, 471.

[16] *Collection of City Elections* (Guildhall library).

CHAPTER XII

[1] *Annual Register,* 1770, p. 109; 1771, p. 96.

[2] *Ibid.,* 1772, p. 82.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Collection of Acts of Common Council* (1790, Guildhall A 85), p. 40.

[5] Ms. *Journal* of the City, JOR 66, entry of May 19th.

[6] *Ibid.*, February.

[7] Ms. *Proceedings* of Common Council, 179 REP, 27, 87, 109, 112.

[8] *Annual Register*, 1775, p. 105.

[9] Ms. *Proceedings*, p. 179, REP 165.

[10] Ms. *Journal*, JOR 66, May.

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] H. W. Bleackley, *Wilkes*, p. 425.

[13] *Annual Register*, 1776, p. 116.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 127.

[15] For all this see *The Speeches of Mr. Wilkes* (1786).

[16] P. Fitzgerald, *Wilkes*, II, 267; Rough's *Letters*, II, 19.

CHAPTER XIII

[1] *Annual Register*, 1776, p. 233.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1775, pp. 47, 51, 52, 102, 156.

[3] *London: City Petitions*, etc., 1778 (Guildhall A 81).

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 103.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 133.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 111.

[7] *Y cymrrodor*, XXIX, 140. "Two Welsh correspondents of John Wilkes" by E. A. Jones, quoting Historical Manuscripts Commission *Report* on the manuscripts of the Earl of Dartmouth, II, 280.

[8] *Annual Register*, 1780, p. 208; 1777, pp. 174, 178; 1776, p. 192. Sawbridge kept strictly within the charter limitations and did not protect non-freemen. See M. D. George, *London in the XVIIIth Century*, p. 142.

[9] See for what follows *The Speeches of Mr. Wilkes* (1786).

[10] *Annual Register*, 1776, p. 39.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 168.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 187.

[14] Treloar, *Wilkes and the City*, p. 186.

[15] Add. Ms., 30880 B, p. 35, *sqq.*

CHAPTER XIV

[1] *Annual Register*, 1778, p. 81 *sqq.*

[2] Add. Ms., 30866; *Annual Register,* 1780, p. 254, *sqq.*

[3] Add. Ms., 30895.

[4] See Wilkes' defense in his address to his electors in 1782. (*Speeches,* p. 439).

[5] Add. Ms., 30888.

CHAPTER XV

[1] Almon, *Letters,* III, 180.

[2] Campbell, *Lives of the Lord Chancellors,* V, 590.

[3] Bleackley, *John Wilkes,* p. 398.

[4] Almon, *Letters,* IV, 219.

[5] Mrs. George, *London in the XVIIIth Century,* pp. 284, 394. I cannot agree with the comments made by this author here.

[6] P. Fitzgerald, *Wilkes,* II, 292.

[7] Almon, *Letters,* V, 58, *sqq.*

[8] See the closing chapters of H. W. Bleackley's *Wilkes.*

[9] E. Green, *Some Bath Love Letters of John Wilkes.*

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